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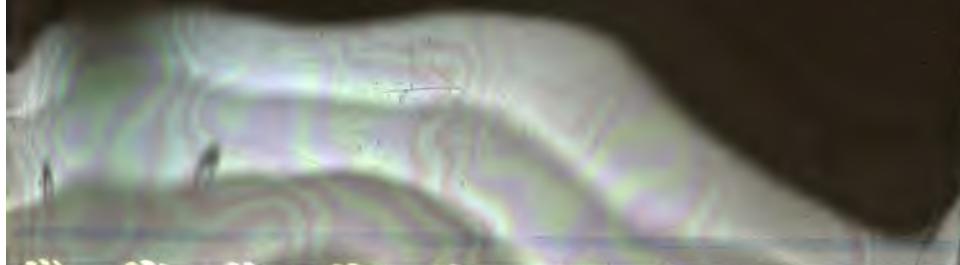
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THE
AMBASSADOR
EXTRAORDINARY





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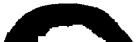
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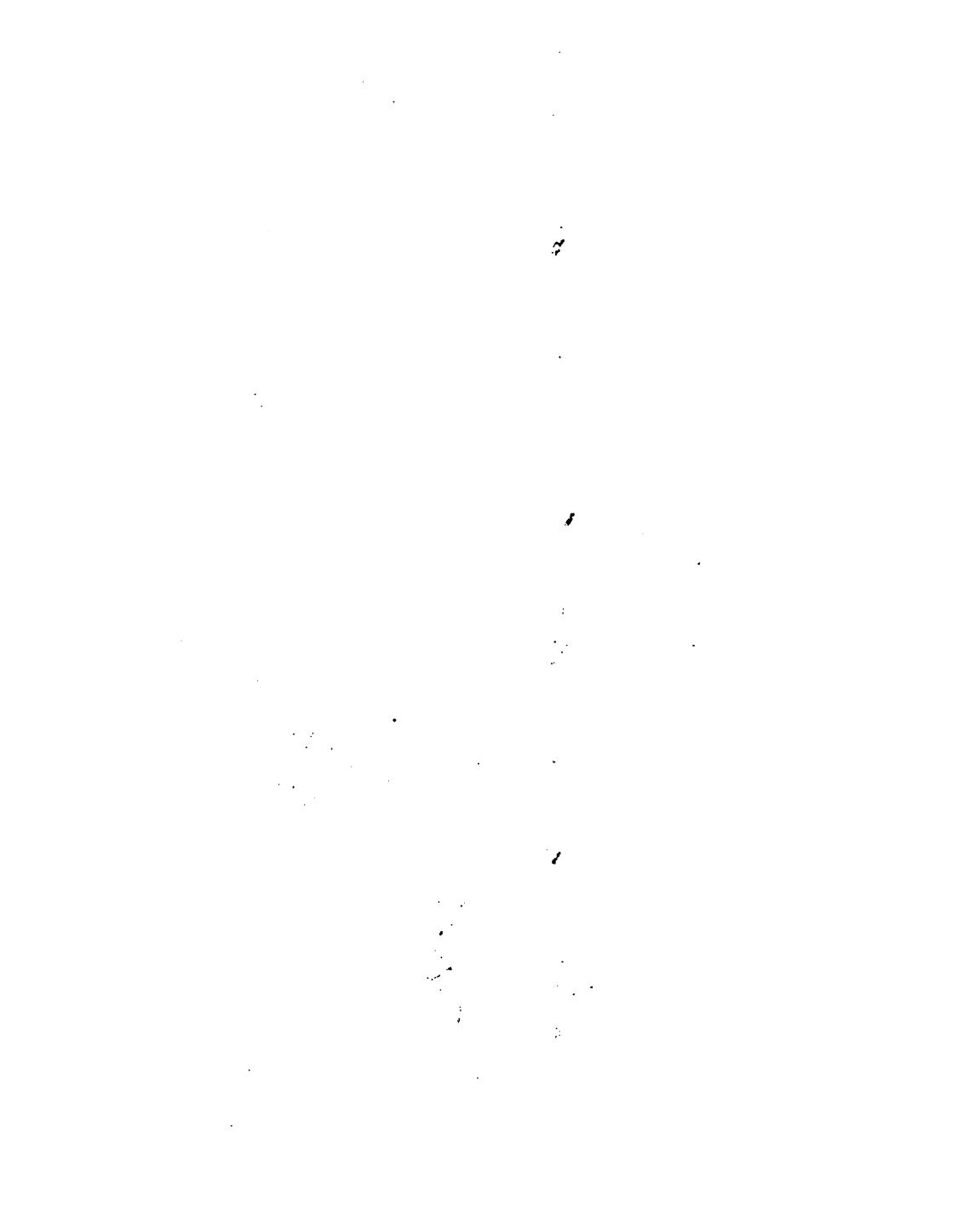
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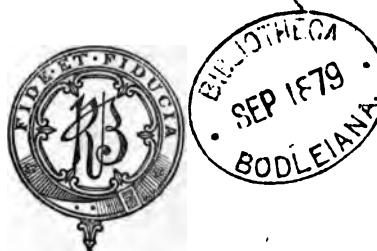
HIS EXCELLENCY
THE
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY.

'The Son of Mystery,
Since God suffers him to be,
He also is God's minister.'

'Sleep, sleep, O City ! till the light
Wakes you to sin and shame again ;
Whilst on your dreams, like dismal rain,
I scatter downward, through the night,
My maledictions, dark and deep !'

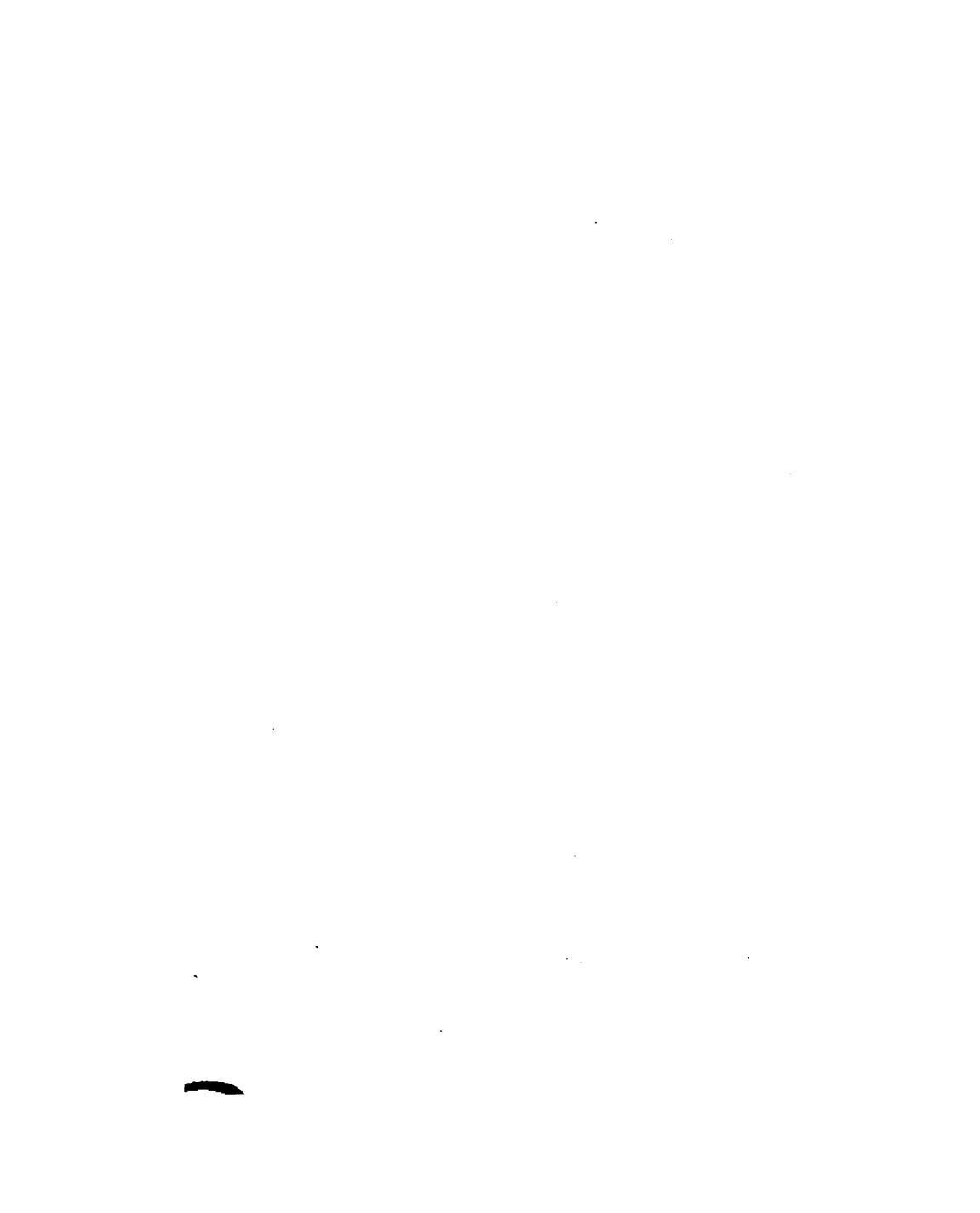
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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1879.
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251. f. 209.



PREFACE.

IF there be anything of ours, in this incomprehensible wild World, against which, it may be hoped and still hoped, ‘the Gates of Hell’ shall never be permitted to prevail, the author of this unambitious story would humbly say it is the Blessed Quality of Human Love. ‘Love never faileth. There abide these three—Faith, Hope, and Love ; but the greatest of these is Love !’

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THE
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY.

CHAPTER I.

MOUNT MEDUSA BY THE RIVER.

LIKE a casket of fair ivory, reposing on a tissue of soft silks and gold, lies the mansion of Mount Medusa by the River ; the residence of his Excellency the Viscount Malign, Ambassador Extraordinary, Minister Plenipotentiary.

In its architectural design this dainty palace is of that delicate style of sunny Italy which we call the later Renaissance ; on every front presenting a changing face of finely wrought and sculptured masonry, and the whole exquisitely, crowned by a central dome of graceful contour and commanding altitude.

Slightly elevated upon a terrace, the house occupies the midst of an expansive area of voluptuous lawn, whose lofty enclosing walls are covered with ivy and buried in the ever-green thicket of a labyrinth of shaded paths. Around this space, north, east, and west, there stretches a wide extent of open grass, studded with groups of timber : on the south there is the river.

Along the river there runs a broad straight promenade with balustraded wall. From this stately embankment the eye commands on one hand and the other a prospect of the majestic stream, stretching downwards to the Great City, upwards into the open country. In front, the horizon is formed at a remote distance by a range of hills, covered, like the intervening land, with the fields of pasture and tillage, and luxuriantly adorned with trees. At the extreme right the sun sets over loftier ground. On the left the abode of millions covers the distance like a mysterious ocean, to-day slumbering peacefully beneath a sky of paradise, yesterday seething under clouds and fogs as if the Metropolis of Empire were the Mouth of the Pit.

The mansion is of three storeys. The principal floor stands a few steps above the terrace level, and accommodates the saloons ; over these are the sleeping apartments ; below are the offices of the domestics.

On the north a spacious hall of entrance and grand staircase look out upon a paved forecourt, of large dimensions and of circular plan, surrounded by a covered colonnade. The southern front is occupied throughout its whole length by a single magnificent gallery, which overlooks the lawn and the river. On the east there are the dining saloon and the libraries ; on the west are the withdrawing-rooms. In the centre of the house there is a large and lofty cortile, lighted from the dome, and surrounded by arched balconies.

Facing the portico of entrance, an imposing propylæum or gateway is seen beyond the forecourt ; from which an avenue of elms extends in a right line to the distant high-road. This gateway is guarded by a janitor's lodge outside the wall, and affords the only means of access to the grounds.

One prominent characteristic of Mount Medusa is thus the severe refinement of

its privacy. Once within the circuit of its wide enclosure and the great gates closed, there is absolutely no communication with the outer world even by a postern door. The great gates, moreover, seldom open except to let his Excellency's carriage pass, or his Excellency on horseback followed by his groom. The intercourse of business for the household is carried on through the janitor. Even the labours of gardening have to be conducted while his Excellency happens to be out ; when the workmen are hurried in as he leaves the gate, to be withdrawn with equal promptitude at the signal which announces his return.

The birds sing sweetly about Mount Medusa, but all else is silence.

CHAPTER II.

THE SANCTUARY.

WITHIN the house the most notable of all the apartments is the long gallery which occupies the southern front. This is the private chamber of the Ambassador. It is over fifty yards in length, and nearly ten in width ; and at each end there is a semicircular alcove.

The south wall contains an unbroken range of casements, which in fair weather stand all open to the green lawn and the river. Facing each of these windows, there is formed in the opposite wall an arched recess, in which is a painting, a full-length figure of heroic size and attitude. Between these pictures, and between the casements, there are placed cabinets of books and curiosities, surmounted by busts and vases of marble and bronze.

In the four corners of the apartment there

stand, flanking the two alcoves, two pairs of statues ; comely women, upon whom a special light is made to fall artistically from above.

The wall surface is of a fine plaster, polished like marble, and covered with tender arabesques. The ceiling, a semi-elliptic vault, is painted ; a processional train of figures passing along each side, emerges at one end, the east, from misty clouds, at the other disappears into misty clouds again. The backgrounds, with the arch above, are of a dim ethereal blue, powdered with bright, cold, silver stars.

The floor is of polished tessellated marbles, and lies entirely uncovered. Tables of dainty mosaic, upon slender bronze frames, are disposed at regular intervals ; upon these are laid books, portfolios, ornaments, lamps, statuettes of porcelain and of metal, occasionally writing materials, despatch boxes, and loose documents. Chairs in ebony and gold, and couches to correspond, are placed everywhere in symmetrical array.

The alcoves at the ends of the gallery are without windows. Their walls are hung with tapestry, representing a crowd of indistin-

guishable forms, in crisp, cold neutral tints; the vaults are of impenetrable black. In the midst of each there lies a block of alabaster, upon which is placed, by unseen hands from day to day, a wreath of withered flowers. Before this, as if it were an altar, stands a fountain-basin—a tazza of dark bronze—sustained upon the upraised hands of a figure of the same; from the midst of the basin there rises noiselessly a slender sluggish jet of crimson spray, filling the air around with a soft, sickly incense.

What serves still more to confer upon this Sanctuary—for so he calls it—of the Ambassador Extraordinary a characteristic effect, is the peculiar style of the paintings and sculptures with which it is embellished; perhaps, also, the peculiar nature of the subjects which they represent.

If the processions along the vaulted ceiling might seem at first to be composed promiscuously of a mere expert presentment of figures—men and women, young and old, stately and unstately, graceful and not, coming forth from clouds behind and moving into clouds before—they prove, on better know-

ledge, to be kings, prophets, judges of the world, high priests and heroes, histrios and fools, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ; princesses of love and beauty, queens of pride and pomp, sirens, traitresses, courtesans ; victors and vanquished, tormentors and tormented, tyrants and slaves ; all of the same resemblance at the last—one shadowy clair-obscure ; truly a most mysterious, most melancholy company !

So also the portraits along the wall, painted in like manner, are men of mark and metal, now by name ; great conquerors, mighty rulers, cruel masters of the world, inflexible disposers of events : not, however, Sesostris, Alexander, Cæsar ; not even Great Karl or Great Napoleon ; far less Moses, David, Paul, or Luther ; but Nero, Caligula, Herod, Attila, Timour, Nadir, the Borgia, the Visconti, Philip of the Inquisition, Charles of St. Bartholomew's Day, Torquemada, Alva, and more, stern, grim, and pale !

No less remarkable, also, are the four statues of comely women set in the four corners of the gallery, on which the upper light plays so prettily : they look like Summer,

Autumn, Winter, and sweet Spring; but they are Jezebel the queen, Delilah the betrayer, Sapphira the cheat, Herodias the wanton; and they are chiselled in some shadowy, transitory manner, plastic as if moulded in soft, dead dust, rather than cut in marble.

And there are yet two more of such fair figures, forming a group in the centre of all; supporters of a monumental globe of obscured crystal, upon whose surface some secret radiance causes the revolving light and darkness of the world to move across the mimic continents and seas, just as the sun performs his circuit. These statues are of corroded silver, daintily gilt; they profess to be the Real and the Ideal of Love. But one is the wife of Egyptian Potiphar; the other is the woman of much fair speech whose husband was not at home when there passed by the young man void of understanding: and even these light hearts seem of the same beclouded unsubstantiality, and have less in their eyes of gaiety, alas! than gloom.

The bronzes alone, which sustain upon their hands the fountain-basins before the altars of the withered flowers, are of a diffe-

rent motive from the rest. They are simply grand, stolid, priestly men ; but one has the head of an ox, one that of an eagle ; and the jets of crimson spray which spread around the sickly incense issue from between the jaws of smoothly coiled and glittering serpents, whose wicked eyes are rubies.

Even when the sun of summer at its best flings happy radiance through the windows, this Sanctuary of the Viscount Malign seems peopled with shadows of the unresting dead ; but when at midnight it pleases his Excellency to walk in meditation up and down the marble floor, under the light of opal lamps, and with the eyes of this ungracious company—for so have they been painted—all following him as he moves, it is scarce enough to say that the Ambassador Extraordinary declares himself indeed to be of no mere mortal mould.

CHAPTER III.

THE VISCOUNT MALIGN.

HIS Excellency the Viscount Malign is of grandiose figure, considerably above the ordinary stature of men, erect and proud, without blemish or infirmity. His hair and trim pointed beard are of dark grey; his figure is finely proportioned in every part; his attitudes and gestures are serene and graceful; his whole bearing is singularly elegant and refined. But what is most remarkable is his countenance—not so much in its noble configuration as in a certain inflexible beauty of its repose.

When the sculptor who models a portrait face has at length achieved by laborious manipulation all that imitative art can accomplish, he may still be disappointed. Dexterity can do no more, and yet the

clay is still clay, the lineaments are void of animation. Clasping with his trembling fingers the yielding earth, he resolves upon a final effort. If it fails, he can but recommence his labour ; but haply it may not fail. Almost at hazard, he gently strains one or another of the features into a new grace, perhaps only the pose of the whole into a new attitude. To his eager eye there is suddenly exhibited a vital change. Something has breathed into those nostrils the breath of life. He will touch the work no more. He will leave it for ever thus, with the inspiration of accident for the acmé of art.

But yet, when we have grown familiar with it, this very life-look may become by continual contemplation almost painful. For it is always the same. Its fixedness becomes its fault. Why does it never vary ? We wish it would disappear, life-look though it be, and either return without this fixedness or not return at all. Better to be all clay, since it cannot be all flesh, rather than half clay, half flesh—clay in the mere guise of flesh, flesh in the guise of clay.

It is some such reflection as this that

passes through the mind of one who sees the countenance of Viscount Malign for the first time. The features are indeed noble and intellectual. The complexion, although bloodless and cold, is clear as porcelain. But the fixity of expression is that of a statue. Eyes move and glisten ; lips part in speech ; they even smile, they laugh ; but the forehead is without a wrinkle, the eyebrows without a change ; the very eyelids seem to be set at one unvarying interval, within which the dark glowing orbs move—like living things in a dead face. Thus, although there is stamped upon the whole a certain most courtly pleasantness, and a superb, ineffable repose, its grace is as the grace of some other world than this ; the soul it mirrors is not as the soul of man.

But it is not upon every occasion that the Ambassador Extraordinary is pleased to exhibit animation. For his embassy is a grave one, not to be conducted in mere joy and gladness. No one can look upon him without feeling that he carries much upon his mind — more than commonly falls to the lot of even an Ambassador

Extraordinary. Especially must it be said that no one can sit by him, if so admitted, in audience, or walk with him in conference upon the green turf of his lawn, or along his terrace by the river, without perceiving that his Excellency's intellect has a certain imperious grasp of the world from which mortal man may scarcely hope to escape, and that his Excellency's purposes are secret and profound beyond the power of mortal man to fathom. And if it should happen that his Excellency looks you for a moment in the face—and for this reason he generally looks on the ground or far away—you may discover more. For there is in his large lustrious eyes some keen electric potency, under whose spell even the most innocent affectation or the most harmless diplomacy becomes hopeless and abashed, and the conscience stands revealed before him in that naked truth in which men and women of the world fear so much to be seen. Even as his Excellency's carriage passes rapidly along the country roads, or through the streets of the town, if his Excellency should by accident look about him, the momentary glance



may cause some strong man to shiver, or some fine lady to quail, as if a breath of terrible danger were suddenly in the wind. His Excellency's carriage is dark grey picked out daintily with crimson and white ; and it is drawn by a pair of high-stepping black horses in delicately silver-mounted harness. The servants are Nubians, in a quaint livery of the same dark grey and silver.

Although his Excellency Viscount Malign sees but little company at Mount Medusa, he permits himself to see much of the world without in the select circles of society. There are even some of the cream of the cream of fine ladies and fine gentlemen who consider themselves to enjoy his intimate acquaintance. A few go so far as to boast of his friendship ; people these, however, to whom the phrase may not perhaps convey much depth of meaning. Like many other great personages, he is busily occupied, although never in a hurry. In conversation he talks less than he listens. But, always courtly, and always in magnificent repose, his mere presence, even in silence, has an impressiveness which rebukes frivolity and

makes hypocrisy and selfishness ashamed. When he enters a saloon, there is an unconscious flutter passes through the company ; when he leaves, there is an unconscious sigh of relief.

What is the nature of his embassy, and from whence he brings his credentials, are questions that need not be asked, for they cannot be answered. There is more in heaven and earth—and under the earth—than has yet been dreamt of in our philosophy ; it is enough to know that his Excellency the Viscount Malign wears no gewgaws on his breast, and occupies himself with no mere craft of state. Ever active, and never showing signs of fatigue, he passes to and fro amongst the daily crowd ; received not without a sense of distrust, but not without a feeling of respect ; feared by those who welcome him, but welcomed by those who fear.

CHAPTER IV.

MONSIGNORE.

AMONGST the prominent ecclesiastics of the day, one of the most prominent is Monsignore Saint-Paul.

Distinguished by semi-aristocratic birth without supineness, scholarly education without pedantry, and elegant manners without affectation, the Reverend Paul Saint-Paul, some twenty years ago, had the good fortune to attain at an early age a leading position amongst that transcendental section of the Reformed Church which doubts whether the Reformation was not a mistake. At length, so irksome did his doubts become, and so great his fear of walking alone, that he sought refuge in the great Unreformed Church, where neither doubting nor walking alone is ever permitted. The result was

all he could desire. Resigning himself without reserve to the consoling spirit of his new associations, he speedily achieved the absolute serenity of absolute irresponsibility under absolute authority. Peace became perfect where confidence was so complete ; and young Father Saint-Paul, always the most amiable of men, was also the most happy. In him, as it would seem, was solved at last the problem of the perfectibility of man. Faith was unquestionable where belief was unquestioning. Hope was triumphant where nothing was worthy of desire. Charity was superseded in the fruition of resignation, where neither love nor hatred could be suffered to intervene. Diversity of creed disappeared entirely under the irrefragable reign of dogma. Controversy died and was buried where there was nothing left to debate. Pleasure and pain alike were lost in duty. Even the anxieties of duty vanished in the felicity of regeneration so sublime ; for how could he do wrong who had surrendered his title to do right ? What remained, therefore, of the young Father Saint-Paul, when thus felicitously delivered

from the world, the flesh, and the devil, was a refined spirit enjoying ineffable rest which nothing could ever disturb. Even self-denial had no place in him who had no self to deny.

It is not to be wondered at if to this super-admirable person there has come promotion duly. He is Monsignore Saint-Paul. Not that he has ever sought honours ; honours to him are nothing. But when work has had to be performed, in a Church for whose service he has been found so well adapted, it must obviously be such as he that should be invited to perform it. If, also, the priest who best obeys the sceptre of authority becomes in turn the fittest to wield it, so he especially who has no opinion of his own becomes the safest director of the opinion of others. Monsignore has long ago discovered that what is called Opinion is in fact Antichrist. Its very existence, therefore, except as a mirage, he ignores, and, if it were worth while to take the trouble, would deny ; for a moment, perhaps, the phenomenon may deceive the unwary, but to approach it with open eyes, says Monsignore, with his beatific smile, is to lose sight of such a thing for ever.

This fine ecclesiastic has now reached the ripe age of fifty, and the high dignity which his title implies. This, at least, in public ; but in private there is more to tell. For to such an unusual degree has Monsignore acquired the confidence of seniors and superiors, that his secret relations to supreme authority are not only the most delicate and confidential, but the most obscure. It is but too well known, indeed, to those who are within the veil—in vulgar phrase behind the scenes—that even the highest offices in the Church have to be exercised under the control of Monsignore Saint-Paul as the chief confidant of Rome.

To condescend upon a description of the personal appearance of so sublimated a divine is a necessity that must be regretted on principle, but can scarcely be set aside in practice. He is of medium height, of easy and stately carriage. Being no ascetic (for why should he mortify the flesh who has so wholly escaped from its power?) he is even plump and almost rosy. Some churchmen of distinction have their hair cut short, some even have it wholly removed by the razor ; but Monsignore's head having become beauti-

fully bald—all except a certain becoming margin which passes from temple round to temple—he wears so far his natural covering of soft flaxen curls. His eyes are blue and sparkling. His nose, of course, is clean-cut aquiline. His lips are thin and firmly set. His chin is gracefully protuberant ; his jaw authoritatively massive. He is closely shaven ; but it is remarked by the ladies that if he were only to wear a slight moustache, and possibly some such thing as a very small vandyke, Monsignore, with his beautiful light hair, would be too much more than an angel ! Monsignore confesses a good many of these ladies ; they take it as an especial favour. He is understood to be lenient in his penances ; and some of the young and lighthearted of his penitents—not to say lightheaded—have been known to observe to each other that when he lets them off so easily, and blesses them besides with such a heavenly smile, it is positively almost more than poor human nature can do to refrain from kissing the darling !

CHAPTER V.

THE PRINCE.

WE pass to a certain lodging near the clubs. The house, a small one, is kept by an old butler and an old cook ; a respectable pair, who have long been diligent in business—the business of being good servants to good lodgers. Now, however, they entertain but one gentleman in their house, a single gentleman ; one who, in fact, occupies the whole of it, and pays them handsomely for the accommodation and service.

This single gentleman is no less than an exiled prince. His father, the Grand Duke, was expelled from his hereditary dominions for no particular reason but the muscularity of the times, which a certain hereditary want of muscularity prevented him from contending with so effectually as might be

wished. Having then fallen into a condition of great nervous debility, the deposed sovereign was permitted, under an assumed name, to drink the waters at a variety of pleasant resorts ; till he unfortunately died of a bottle of bad champagne. Since then the son has made himself so sufficiently comfortable in his lodging near the clubs as to be able sometimes to say that this country, begad ! is, after all, the only country in this world—as if he reserved other worlds for separate consideration—in which one can really live like a gentleman amongst gentlemen ; a sentiment which in these days commends itself strongly to a good many authorities, and for a good many reasons which need not be entered upon in these pages.

His Royal Highness, nevertheless, does not at all abate the hope of a restoration to the throne of his ancestors. But one thing he judiciously practises is patience. Other practices might also be mentioned as equally notable characteristics of his ; but prudence, and, in fact, propriety, stand in the way. The life of the Prince is certainly not what it might be. We may, however, rest con-

tent to understand that he smokes a good deal and drinks a good deal; and that he keeps the company of people who smoke and drink a little more or less like himself.

The literary and scientific education of his Royal Highness does not appear to have been very complete—although no doubt quite sufficient for filling a throne, or for living as a gentleman amongst gentlemen. His political education, however, has been of a much higher order. He is a prodigious admirer of Constitutionalism. People, begad! require government, of course. Reigning houses are set up by a gracious Providence for governing them. But there are always gentlemen to be found to do the ministerial work; and it matters little, in his opinion, whether these gentlemen are appointed in one way or in another. Personally they will almost always be found amenable to proper influence; and if one set won't, another will. The work of a reigning prince is really little else than the exercise of this influence—to keep these gentlemen in the right groove. begad! If he manages them well, they are monstrous convenient in every way. If

things go right, only let these gentlemen have the credit of it, and everybody is satisfied. If things go wrong, why, turn these gentlemen out, and take in others, and everybody is satisfied just the same, begad !

Brothers and sisters are one's greatest trouble, almost always ; only that, in his opinion, uncles and aunts are worse. They will persist in meddling—looking after themselves—instead of leaving all that kind of thing to the head of the house. Judicious management, however, still goes a great way. A respectable reigning prince can't exactly send his aunt to prison, or stop his brother's allowance ; but he can let the ministers bully them to any degree, which is the same thing. Thank God ! he himself has neither brother nor sister, uncle nor aunt ; a good thing too, for another reason—he is thus the sole hope of the dukedom, begad ! Adversity, again, is said to mellow the character of a prince. He has suffered a dooced deal of adversity, and he finds it has mellowed his character monstrously. He admits that he is particular about his cigars ; also about his Burgundy ; but in his clothes and other things he is not

half so fussy as he once was—not half, begad! And this he attributes to adversity.

His Royal Highness is a somewhat puffy gentleman; forty years of age, short and stout, conspicuously dressed, and always smelling of scent. In his manners he is rather uneasy than awkward; as if, in spite of his political views, he were conscious of certain infirmities being discoverable in him by the 'fierce light that beats about' even the coldest shadow of a throne. His private revenue is not great, although fortunately sufficient for his wants. Some people say he is a voluptuary, but the word is thought by others to be too violent for his character. That he is self-indulgent, no one would deny; but if self-indulgence is not to be permitted to princes, what is the world coming to?

CHAPTER VI.

THREE FRIENDS.

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS and Monsignore Saint-Paul, however different in personal character, are understood to be great friends. Monsignore, at one time, lived for two or three years in Rome, and there made the Prince's acquaintance. He is still an occasional visitant to the Eternal City, and a constant correspondent with it, as we know. Inasmuch, therefore, as the interests of his Royal Highness are in some occult way bound up with those of the Supreme Pontiff, it is a matter of convenience that the favourite priest should be to the Prince, as he is to a good many other distinguished persons, the trusted representative of his superiors.

Some people, who consider themselves to have a little knowledge of the world, say

they have no doubt that Monsignore, with his curling locks and smiling countenance, is capable of enjoying with his Royal Highness at an odd time a good cigar and a good glass of wine in private ; but it would be a mistake to believe this, for Monsignore maintains his dignity as a churchman much more carefully than such a practice would admit of. No doubt he can, when occasion requires, like the great Apostle of the same name, be all things to all men, if by any means he may gain some ; but, like everybody else, the Apostle himself must have drawn the line somewhere ; and as we can scarcely venture to imagine him smoking and drinking with bachelor royalty, however royal, so we had better understand that Monsignore's relations to his Royal Highness, intimate as they may be, do not go so far as that. Still, the Prince allows his familiars to see clearly enough that he relies upon Monsignore more than upon any one else within reach for both his opinions and his expectations. Monsignore Saint-Paul, begad ! is a prodigious able man, and a perfect treasure to have at the elbow of any reigning prince. When he is restored

to the throne of his ancestors, he will have Monsignore made his bishop, begad !

Monsignore speaks of his royal admirer with equal consideration, although in a different style of encomium. His Royal Highness seems to him to be—a well-intentioned and intelligent prince ; and, if it should please the Divine Disposer of Events to bring about a certain change in his Royal Highness's circumstances, no doubt the dukedom might reasonably expect to possess in his Royal Highness a—a well-intentioned and intelligent sovereign.

On more than one occasion some comparatively plain-speaking member of the great world has been known to hint to Monsignore, when thus favourably commenting upon his Royal Highness's character, that his Royal Highness's behaviour might with advantage be modified ; but Monsignore offers his gold snuff-box to such a person with a perfection of grace that causes the conversation instantly to change.

His Royal Highness has another intimate friend in his Excellency the Viscount Malign. Not that his Excellency is understood to hob-

nob with his Royal Highness as some do, but they see each other frequently.

His Excellency and Monsignore Saint-Paul are also understood to be very intimate friends ; and their friendship, as we should suppose, is understood to be of a highly elevated character. Whether it has anything to do with foreign affairs, as the friendship of both of these personages for his Royal Highness no doubt has, people say they cannot exactly tell ; but, looking at the astuteness of the parties, they think it probably has.

CHAPTER VII.

AT LADY AURORA'S.

THE Lady Aurora Dragonet, a fashionable widow, is at home in a quiet way on certain evenings. Her little reunions are select, and in a manner sought after.

‘My dear Viscount Malign !’ exclaims the Lady Aurora, ‘I am truly honoured. I have not set eyes upon you for—it must be ages !’

His Excellency the Ambassador Extraordinary is looking a long way off over the lady’s shoulder. The lady also, who is an experienced person, is looking a long way off over his. People who are intimate with his Excellency acquire this habit, in imitation of himself; and it answers very well on both sides when they get accustomed to it.

People of fashion, as a rule, can do a good

deal in the way of staring, and can bear a good deal in the way of being stared at ; a thorough-paced elderly woman-of-the-world, for instance, if she were put to it, could stare the devil himself out of countenance, and never wink an eyelash. But, nevertheless, although Viscount Malign makes a point of never staring, or returning a stare, but rather of looking either at the ground or into space a long way off, it is said for certain that even a thorough-paced old woman-of-the-world who does not happen to know better, if her eyes and his happen by accident to be fixed upon each other for only a moment of time, will find herself remarkably uncomfortable.

Some say at a venture that this is an instance of the Evil Eye, and the doctors have been heard to express an opinion that it is a case of animal magnetism—the Viscount's eye being a negative pole ; but such explanations do not seem to make people much wiser, and the popular impression is generally left in its simplicity thus—that the Viscount's eye is somehow or other a very awkward thing to catch, like the Tartar.

Accordingly, careful as the Viscount is, this is the sort of thing that will occasionally happen. His Excellency and some one of his more familiar acquaintance will be engaged in a most interesting conversation face to face. They look at each other, however, a long way off, as if mutually afflicted with strabismus. For a single instant the Viscount happens to focus his gaze upon the face of his friend. The friend unconsciously meets the glance. The conversation takes an unexpected turn—generally towards uncomfortable frankness on the part of the friend. The friend is discomposed. The Viscount recovers himself, and looks off into space or down at the floor more intently than ever ; but even then, it is enough to say that matters often get very much worse before they get better.

Again, some young and less experienced person, with more of mere flippancy, probably, than anything less excusable, will take the liberty of regarding the large elderly Viscount fixedly—let us say a gushing young lady or a self-assured young gentleman. If the elderly Viscount happens to accept the

challenge, the young and less experienced person is speedily so affected by the result as to find the evening's amusement very seriously impaired ; and such a one as the charming Miss Felicia Robinson-Dobinson will exclaim in relating the little incident :

‘ My dear ! the man's eye went through me like a bayonet ! And if he had begun to tell off on his dreadful fingers the very inmost secrets of my poor dear heart, I shouldn't have been a bit surprised ! ’

Or such a one as Snokes of the Artillery, or Goslynge of the Bar, will tell you in pretty much the same spirit: ‘ Pon my soul ! thought the old fellow was going to put me through an exam. in something like the Church Catechism, before the whole company, by Juv ! I was glad to get away.’

Even such a one as Tom Tuppeny-happeny, commonly called Tommy Number One—fellow that sleeps with one eye open —may be heard to say: ‘ Gad ! it's as well to give his Excellency a wide berth ; he's got a squint in his eye, or some dashed thing of that kind, that I don't half like.’

So his Excellency the Viscount Malign

makes his way through the little crowd of superior people who occupy the Lady Aurora Dragonet's drawing-rooms.

‘ Begad, it's the Viscount !’ says his Royal Highness ; ‘ how do, Viscount ?’

The Viscount hopes his Royal Highness is well, and is extremely gratified to hear that he is so—never was better. But both parties take a little pains to look over each other's shoulders, a long way off ; and his Royal Highness may no doubt be a little embarrassed nevertheless, familiar friends as they are.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEAR LORD FREDDY.

THE Prince's embarrassment, however, if any, is fortunately relieved by the approach of a mutual old friend.

'Ah, Viscount!' he exclaims, in a mellow voice, 'I am so very much pleased to see you; looking so well too!'

His Excellency, gazing vaguely through the floor, is very much pleased to see the mutual old friend looking so well; and asks whether there is any one here whom they know.

Nobody in particular. But the mutual old friend also looks vaguely through the floor.

Another friend approaches. This is a little old gentleman, with beady eyes under shaggy grey eyebrows, very warm clothing, and a large wig of curly brown hair to indicate the

original condition of his locks. The lamp of life is going out in this old gentleman ; but it is going out slowly, and, judging by his pitiful look, its flame is clinging to a long unsavoury snuff. He is remarkable, however, for his conversational powers, and is known as dear Lord Freddy.

‘And how do you find yourself to-night,’ says the mutual old friend, blandly, ‘my dear Lord Frederick ? May I say pootty well ?

The dear lord has various bodily infirmities ; for his years have been worked hard. He is, therefore, an invalid ; and his friends must always ask him how he finds himself to-night, and do so in a tone of sympathy so as to propitiate his conversational powers.

‘As usual, as usual !’ is the little lord’s reply, uttered like an explosion of damp crackers. ‘Oldish man, you know ; can’t last for ever.’

‘No, begad !’ says his Royal Highness, sympathetically. ‘Feel shaky myself sometimes.’

‘You !’ says dear Lord Freddy. ‘Only a chicken ; half as old as I am, rotten as a pear, damme !’

The dear lord, therefore, not only is caustic, but can be coarse. Besides, he laughs at his own jokes. He offers his snuff-box, therefore, to his Excellency Viscount Malign, with a chuckle ; taking care, however, to look over his Excellency's shoulder. His Excellency does not laugh ; but his Royal Highness laughs gaily.

The mutual old friend takes a pinch from my lord's box and smiles.

'How goes the world?' says dear Lord Freddy ; 'how goes the world, sir, eh ?'

'No better, I fear, if no worse.'

'Much worse, *I* think,' says my lord ; 'devilish deal worse. Appeal to my friend Malign. Old foibles, new follies. Old weaknesses, new diseases. Homely old vices, new diabolical double-dyed villanies. People one meets in a house like this—rogues or fools to a man. Women both !'

'Severe,' says the Viscount ; 'somewhat severe.'

'Candid,' says the dear lord, 'only candid ! When I was young, people comparatively honest ; called each other knaves. Now they are knaves, God knows ; call each other

honest ! Hated each other heartily in those days ; not worth the trouble now.

‘I met on the stair,’ says the Viscount Malign, ‘a new bishop.’

‘Missionary fellow,’ says dear Lord Freddy ; ‘going into the bush to convert intelligent children of Nature by tying up his hat with a ribbon ! Can’t be done ! Hope they will eat him ; knew his father well.’

‘Oh fie !’ says the mutual old friend, ‘we must at least admire his motives, dear Lord Frederick.’

‘Oh, of course !’ is his lordship’s answer ; and his Royal Highness, who always enjoys his lordship’s jokes—of which this is one—laughs again.

‘Better stay at home, perhaps,’ says Viscount Malign, ‘and send out men with pickaxes and shovels.’

‘And pistols,’ suggests his Royal Highness, ‘*and* pistols, begad !

‘Oh fie !’ says the mutual old friend ; ‘and who is to be the new chief justice ?’

‘Little Bulldog, I’m told,’ says dear Lord Freddy. ‘Obscure little tricky devil ; no lawyer ; not even a politician. Speech-

maker to order ; likes a bad case ; devilish clever at that. Ministry glad to get rid of him ; thorn in their side ever since they came in !

‘Oh fie, my dear Lord Frederick !’ exclaims the mutual old friend. ‘Oh fie ! Remember you are speaking of the chair of justice and the seat of judgment, dearest Lord Frederick !’

‘Ah !’ says dearest Lord Frederick, ‘so I am, damme, so I am !’

‘I see,’ says the mutual old friend, ‘the great Mr. Hogback has just entered the room. Excellent man !’

‘Hogback !’ says my lord, ‘what Hogback —Jonathan ?’

‘The philanthropist ; I forget his name ; surely it is Ebenezer.’

‘Philanthropist ? Ebenezer ? Don’t know him. Oh yes, I see the man—great ass !’

‘My lord is in spirits to-night,’ says Viscount Malign ; ‘the wind is in the east.’

‘Not at all—due west ! Man enjoys applause of old women at village halls. Come with extra pocket-handkerchiefs. Essence of onion in their smelling-bottles.’

‘Oh fie, my dear lord !’ says the mutual old friend, ‘let us bear with one another.’

‘Devilish clever idea that,’ says his Royal Highness ; ‘dooced constitutional idea !’

But his Royal Highness and the mutual old friend are now carried off by a bevy of fair ladies who have no respect for age ; and dear Lord Freddy takes refuge on a couch. The Viscount Malign sits down beside him in his friendly way.

‘Charming company to-night,’ says his Excellency, looking for a moment into the eyes of the aged nobleman under the heavy brows and heavy wig.

‘Company ? Pah ! Sick of it all, Viscount Malign ; sick of the world ! Shall be glad of a change, whatever it is.’ And his lordship shudders with the cold.

The Viscount looks at him again ; perhaps it is to comfort him.

‘Most miserable of men,’ exclaims the dear old lord ; ‘give you my honour ! One foot in the grave, other shaking on the very verge ! Full of hatreds, full of sorrows. Pity nobody because I deserve no pity myself. Despise everybody because I have

never had the heart to do a good deed !
Lived for myself all my life, Viscount Malign ;
now I shall die by myself, and go to the
devil !

There is also a Lady Fred, a lively lady of
great conversational powers ; but she has re-
sided abroad for many years. They say that
if my Lady Fred had been but a little less
lively in her youth, my lord might have been
a good deal less crabbed in his age.

‘ I will take a little more of your admirable
snuff,’ says his Excellency the Viscount
Malign, ‘ my dearest Lord Frederick.’

The Ambassador Extraordinary shakes
hands with the aged nobleman and takes his
leave ; ‘ So sorry,’ he says, ‘ to go.’

His glove, of dainty kid, must be
cold ; for dear Lord Freddy has a fit of
the shakes after he is gone ; and the Lady
Aurora Dragonet, seeing his distress from a
distance, has to get him into her boudoir
where there is a fire, and to stimulate the
poor flickering flame of his life—clinging to
the long crumbling snuff—with a little brandy.

‘ Kind-hearted sort of old woman,’ says
dear Lord Freddy, when he is able to descend.

to his carriage on the arm of a friend ; 'keeps devilish good brandy too. Fancy she is a judge of the article !'

And so the dear old lord goes forth into the night ; having mightily enjoyed his evening. Just so has he gone forth into the night any time these fifty years, having mightily enjoyed his evening in just the same way. And when at length he goes forth into the night once for all, and makes an end of it, what a vast aggregate of enjoyment he will have had ! 'Damme, yes !' his lordship says, with the air of a gentleman who has stood upon his rights, 'I've had my innings !'

And if it is perhaps to such as this dear lord that his Excellency the Viscount Malign is particularly attentive, 'Damme, yes !' says his lordship again, like a gentleman who understands what's what, 'I know the Viscount well !'

CHAPTER IX.

A PAIR OF LOVERS.

MEANWHILE his Excellency Viscount Malign, having conversed for a moment here and there with one acquaintance and another, is passing through an anteroom on his way out. There happen to be in this anteroom, otherwise alone, two young persons, evidently a pair of lovers, and evidently not quite at home at my lady Aurora's. They are looking from a window—perhaps at the stars. It may be remarked that they are both tall handsome young people, and of stately although simple manners.

As the Viscount passes behind them, the girl—little more than a splendid child—starts. A meteor, possibly, has shot athwart the sky, and she is thoughtlessly alarmed. So it comes to pass that she instinctively grasps

the arm of her companion, as if for some vague kind of help. By some equally unconscious impulse the young man places his hand for a moment upon the waist of the maiden. At that instant they both look around ; they feel as if mischief had been done ; their blushes testify it ; some one may have witnessed their indiscretion.

The Viscount Malign bows pleasantly to the youthful pair, and passes on. But they tremble, as if an avenging angel had looked upon them—out of those burning eyes set in that pallid inflexible face.

CHAPTER X.

PARSON JOHN JACOB AND HIS CURATE.

THE young people whom his Excellency has thus happened to see standing so inconsiderately hand in hand and something more at the Lady Aurora Dragonet's anteroom window are Julian Saint-Paul and Madonna Gay. Julian Saint-Paul is a young physician, the son of the Reverend John Jacob Saint-Paul.

When the charming person who is now known as Monsignore Paul Saint-Paul was an equally charming curate in the Church as by law established, he had received orders under an uncle, the Reverend John Jacob Saint-Paul above alluded to, the respected incumbent of a small rural parish called by the name of Ditchwater.

This unsavoury name is not to be under-

stood to indicate that the parish was possessed of either an unwholesome soil or an inordinately mean population. The parish of Ditchwater was fertile and umbrageous. It contained, as population of the masculine gender, one high-nosed earl, one sporting squire, five tavern-keepers, a number of farmers and their sons, and two little hamlets of labouring men chiefly devoted to drink. The feminine community corresponding consisted of the high-nosed countess, three or four elderly maiden ladies of good family, the due proportion of farmers' wives and widows and their daughters, the landladies and their daughters, and the women of the hamlets, who, as a rule, were very nearly as respectable as their husbands were not.

Over these good people the Reverend John Jacob Saint-Paul and his delightful young curate ruled in matters ecclesiastical for several years in infinite harmony. The rector, it is important to know, was a particularly plain-spoken churchman, low and broad, or in fact anything rather than high or narrow ; and when he called a spade a spade, no one could mistake his meaning.

But the young curate was of quite another order. He never called a spade a spade, and no one ever knew his meaning ; indeed, perhaps on this very account he was the only person who could keep Parson John Jacob, as he was commonly called in his parish of Ditchwater, in any order at all.

The parson was a widower with an only boy, by name Julian. The boy was very much attached to his cousin, and used to call him dear Cousin Paul.

But when at length the Reverend Paul Saint-Paul began to cherish the misgivings which we have had occasion to allude to, and in further course of time was led by his feelings of duty to disown the low and broad party and quit his Ditchwater charge somewhat abruptly —or, as some people called it, rather more than cleverly—it must be acknowledged that the fury of his uncle failed altogether to keep within the bounds of decorum. Being pleased to consider himself personally insulted, Parson John Jacob not only called a spade a spade, but called his nephew, in the simplest and strongest terms, a born idiot ; and could only consent to qualify this appellation by broadly

adding that he was even more of a knave than a fool. When, again, as the unquestionable genius of the young divine for the development of exasperating doctrine and discipline began to advance him rapidly in the esteem of his new party, his outraged relative only the more and more bitterly denounced him as a wilful renegade and petty rogue; and when in fulness of time the popular 'priest,' as he preferred to be designated, to the still augmenting horror of his uncle, became an even more popular pervert—for he carried with him into the bosom of the ancient communion the best half of a fashionable metropolitan congregation—Parson John Jacob roundly pronounced him to be little less than an Ambassador Extraordinary of Satan; which certainly was going, not only altogether beyond the bounds of common courtesy, but quite out of the sphere of intelligible language.

Ever since those early days, one of the most conspicuous evidences of the fine character of the transformed ecclesiastic has consisted in the meekness with which he has borne the increasingly boisterous assaults

of his relative, in sermons and pamphlets innumerable. It is admitted on all hands that Parson John Jacob has taken leave of his senses ; but it is none the less admitted that his language is all the more caustic and keen. It has been pointed out to him, over and over and over again, that such furious invective serves only the purpose of advancing the interests of the enemy ; but this he cannot help. Neighbouring clergymen have called upon him ; old college chums have written to him ; partisans on his own side have urgently entreated him ; he answers every fool, is all he says, according to his folly, and still keeps up the war. The newspapers have taken up the matter as something between a public scandal and a public joke ; he snaps his fingers at the newspapers. He has been caricatured in weekly cartoons ; he laughs louder at the cartoons than anybody else. The bishop once threatened to admonish him ; he defeated the bishop, he says, in a single round. Many years ago the pope himself, it is whispered, privately damned Parson John Jacob ; the parson simply damned the pope. But Monsignore

has always smiled, and still more sweetly smiled ; and his uncle has been more exasperated by this than by anything else. No doubt also, the more severely he has been assailed, the more rapidly has Monsignore ascended the ladder of preferment ; and in recognition of this, Parson John Jacob has only all the more perseveringly assailed him and in language whose pungency has still increased with exercise.

All the world knows that a worm will turn. If Monsignore Saint-Paul, under his smiling exterior, should be found to cherish in his secret heart a feeling of resentment against his uncle and all that belong to him, what reasonable person ought to wonder at it ? There are hundreds of worthy Christian people who openly say so. In fact, some go so far as to add, when Monsignore declares so sweetly that ' none of these things move him,' that, to speak plainly, they don't believe a word of it.

CHAPTER XI.

JULIAN.

FROM his boyhood, the son of this resolute divine has displayed a character which such a father could not but appreciate to the utmost. To him life has seemed to be a grave matter, an enterprise of real and solid earnestness of purpose ; that purpose he calls duty. It is not exactly the same idea of duty that possesses, for example, his cousin Monsignore Paul Saint-Paul. It is the duty, he says, of man to himself ; whereas Monsignore knows absolutely nothing of such a thing, being all-absorbed, as he would no doubt tell us, in his duty to something much more sublimated than either man or self. Julian, as he again would doubtless put the case, knows nothing of things sublimated ; he sees a confused, mysterious, crowded, wicked world

about him, all in blood and tears ; a glorious, glad, free world as God would have it, but cast down in the mire and trodden upon by cruel feet because shackled with cruel chains ; a world that is to be inevitably liberated some day from the very last of all its bonds, and liberated by the work of resolute men and women, not of divinities and angels ; a world sunk in the abyss of sinful and disgraceful doings, but to rebound by the buoyancy of its own occult virtue, and by bright and grand degrees ascend even to the top-most heaven. For himself, he has a brief hour allotted to him, wherein to try to do his part in his day ; he scarcely knows how to set about the task ; but try he must, or die of sheer shame, for God's sake and his own !

Being, as phrases go, well connected in society, exceedingly handsome, and highly popular, this young man, when he began to develop such views of things, had a good many friends who talked to each other in their drawing-rooms and dining-rooms about him and his behaviour ; and it would be but deceiving the reader to conceal the fact that they all, with one accord, declared him to be

as mad as a hatter—almost, if not quite, as mad as his father Parson John Jacob. In their opinion such a young man's duty was clear. He had to do credit to his friends and relatives ; to amuse himself and make himself amusing ; to be nice—a nice fellow—a very nice fellow, if he had the gift ; to marry well ; to get on ; to take a position in the county. And Julian Saint-Paul, everybody agreed, was not only good-looking, but clever, well educated, open-hearted, open-handed, and nice—very nice, if he would but give himself fair play. But what did he do ? They couldn't understand it. He went to work and studied—of all the filthy things in the world—Physic !

CHAPTER XII.

MISSES GLORIEUSE AND GRACIEUSE.

JULIAN had two maiden aunts, sisters of his mother's, Aunt Glorie and Aunt Gracie, Miss Glorieuse and Miss Gracieuse—Miss Glorieuse dark and stout, Miss Gracieuse fair and slender—very excellent middle-aged ladies, amiable, intelligent, and well off, and both of them still good-looking, although, no doubt, somewhat over forty. These good ladies determined to speak to Julian plainly about his prospects. He was their only sister's only child, and their natural heir; and they had come a hundred miles to have it out with him as a duty to themselves.

‘Good gracious, Julian!’ exclaimed Miss Glorieuse, ‘I can't describe to you how shocked I am!’

‘Pray now, Glorie dear,’ said Miss Gra-

cieuse, 'leave it to me; you'll frighten the poor dear boy.'

'Frighten a fiddle-stick!' said Miss Glo-rieuse.

'Well, dear, I only want, you know——'

'I know you do, dear; I respect your motives; but they are weak.'

'Well, that's all I have to say.'

'Just so. Now, boy, what is this I hear? You want to choose a profession, do you?'

'Yes, aunt,' said Julian; 'I do.'

'Quite right; I admire you for it; kiss me!'

'And so do I,' said Miss Gracieuse, 'kiss me!'

'Gracie! *when* I have done, dear.'

'Well, dear, I only wanted to say, you know——'

'When—I—have—done, dear, then you may speak for a fortnight if you like—three weeks.'

'Well, that's all I have to say.'

'Just so. Now, boy, what do you say to the army?'

'A thing not to be thought of,' said Julian,

in some small degree after the manner of his father—and of his aunt.

‘I’m so sorry to hear you say so, dear child,’ said Miss Gracieuse.

‘Gracie !’ said Miss Glorieuse, ‘when—I—have—*done*, if you please, dear !’

‘That’s all I have to say, dear.’

‘The army, dear Julian, absurd as you may think it, is—physically——’ said Miss Glorieuse.

‘Your aunt Glorie,’ struck in Miss Gracieuse, ‘doesn’t mean medically, you nasty boy.’

‘Gracie, shall I speak, dear, or will you ?

‘Go on, dear ; I beg your pardon, indeed I do.’

‘Physically, Julian, the army is—what shall I say the army is physically, Gracie ?’

‘Coarse, but handsome,’ said Miss Gracieuse.

‘Very masculine,’ said Miss Glorieuse.

‘Sometimes too much so,’ said Miss Gracieuse.

‘Not at all, dear, not at all.’

‘Indeed,’ said Julian, ‘I don’t think, my dear aunts, I am made of fighting stuff.’

‘Stuff and nonsense, child ! You might never have to fight at all,’ said Miss Glorieuse.

‘Make love all your life,’ struck in Miss Gracieuse.

‘Gracie !

‘I beg your pardon, dear.’

‘I am shocked. Then what say you to the law, Julian ?’

‘I don’t like it,’ said Julian, shaking his head.

‘Don’t like it ?’

‘I hate wrangling.’

‘Wigs are hideous,’ said Miss Gracie.

‘But think,’ said Miss Glorie, ‘of the brains inside them, dear !’

‘How can you, Glorie ?’ said Miss Gracie, shading her eyes with her hand. ‘Oh dear ! you gave me quite a turn.’

‘Your aunt Gracie, dear boy,’ said Miss Glorie, ‘is not of a scientific character.’

‘Do pray change the subject, dear,’ said Miss Gracie, taking out her eau de Cologne ; ‘I know you will when I ask you.’

‘Certainly, dear. Well, there is the Church, Julian——’ said Miss Glorieuse.

‘Oh, the dear Church !’ said Miss Gracieuse, recovering herself ; ‘ I do love the Church !

‘ Is it not sweet,’ said Miss Glorieuse, ‘ to contemplate a handsome young man in the pulpit, dear Julian—or in the reading-desk, so as to be nicely seen—with his hair nicely parted down the middle ; and to think how good he is, and how much he means all he says ?’

‘ And how nice it is to mean it, dear !’ said Miss Gracieuse.

‘ Oh yes !’ said Miss Glorieuse ; ‘ oh *yes !*’

‘ And the time comes,’ said Julian, ‘ when he ceases to mean it.’

‘ Julian !’ said Miss Glorieuse, passionately.

‘ Julian !’ said Miss Gracieuse, imploringly.

‘ Except my dear old father,’ said Julian, ‘ I don’t know any one of them who means one half of it.’

‘ Julian !’ said Miss Glorieuse, in horror.

‘ Julian !’ said Miss Gracieuse, in despair,

‘ I beg your pardon, my dear aunts, I’m sure,’ said Julian ; ‘ I didn’t think of what I was saying.’

‘ You bad boy !’ said Miss Glorieuse, stamping her foot.

‘You naughty boy!’ said Miss Gracieuse, shaking her head and wiping her eyes.

‘But why not medicine,’ said Julian; ‘the art divine of healing the sick and relieving the miserable? What profession can be more inviting?’

‘Oh dear!’ said Miss Gracieuse, sniffing violently at her eau de Cologne; ‘how trying!’

‘Gracie! do have patience. Look at me!’

‘Indeed I think so,’ continued the young man. ‘What profession can be more charming than that which enables one to——’

‘To see through the inside of everybody,’ said Miss Glorieuse, loftily; ‘that’s what you mean, Master Julian.’

‘How shocking!’ said Miss Gracieuse; ‘how can you be such a dreadful boy?’

‘Gracie, *if* you please——’

‘I beg your pardon, dear, but the conversation really——’

‘Pray do *not* interrupt me, dear; it’s one’s duty. I was going to say, that of all the horrid things in this horrid world, the *most* horrid in my opinion is to feel that any one you respect——’

‘And love,’ interjected Miss Gracieuse.

‘And love,’ said Miss Glorieuse, ‘knows all about your inside.’

‘And one’s own nephew!’ said Miss Gracieuse, perspiring with horror.

‘Disgusting boy!’ exclaimed Miss Glorieuse.

‘Well,’ said Julian, in despair, ‘look at the Church——’

‘Julian!’ said Miss Glorieuse, imperiously, ‘*permit* me to say that I *think* (and so I’m sure does your aunt Gracie) you’ve said *quite* enough about the Church already. Atheistic principles——’

‘Yes, dear,’ said Miss Gracieuse, ‘and *deistic*!’

‘Satanic!’ said Miss Glorieuse.

‘My dear aunties,’ said Julian, ‘I beg your pardon a thousand times; you quite mis-understand me.’

‘No, Julian!’ said Miss Glorieuse; ‘we are *not* absolute fools.’

‘Glorie, dear,’ said Miss Gracieuse, ‘don’t let us be too hard upon the dear boy.’

‘Look at the army, now,’ said Julian, scarcely knowing what to say.

‘Oh, I do love the army!’ said Miss Gracieuse; ‘if I were a man——’

‘Gracie!’ said Miss Glorieuse.

‘Morally, dear, of course,’ pleaded Miss Gracieuse.

‘If our nephew means,’ said Miss Glorieuse, loftily, ‘that his abominable medical studies are to lead at last to the army——’

‘Oh, delightful!’ said Miss Gracieuse; ‘I never thought of that.’

‘Gracie! *when* I have done, dear.’

But Aunt Gracie could no longer be restrained. She threw her arms round her nephew’s neck. She kissed him with all her might.

‘And, my dearest dearest boy,’ she cried, ‘we will buy you the best commission in the army, if it should cost five thousand pounds! Don’t say another word, dearest Julian; not one word!’

‘My dearest auntie——’

‘It shall be in the Horse Guards Blue!’ cried Aunt Gracie.

‘Red,’ said Aunt Glorie, ‘I prefer.’

‘Red,’ echoed Aunt Gracie, ‘by all means, dear. I accept the correction.’

‘ My dearest aunts——’ said Julian.

But Aunt Gracie kissed all his remonstrances away, and burst into a flood of tears.

‘ To see you, dear, prancing——’

‘ Pray hear me,’ said Julian, in an imploring voice—‘ one word——’

‘ On a great black horse, dear; with a breastplate of steel and a plume of cock’s feathers !

Julian could not help laughing outright.

‘ Dear boy !’ cried Aunt Gracie, ‘ I knew you would come round to your poor auntie’s views. I knew you would, dear. I knew you would !’

‘ Gracie,’ said Aunt Glorie, ‘ come away from the dear child. Julian, kiss me !—and don’t do it again.’

CHAPTER XIII.

FATHER AND SON.

‘My son,’ says Parson John Jacob, ‘you are a man of a thousand, although it is your own foolish old father that says so. The qualities that I see in you are those that I have been striving all my life to acquire. They are not to be acquired. You must have got them from your poor mother, Julian ; you don’t get them from me. Here am I, a rough, reckless old swash-buckler ; nothing better, although, I thank God, nothing worse. Honest I have been, I believe ; and bold I have been, I know ; and God has blessed me especially with great freedom of speech with reference to Paul ; for which I am thankful every day I live. But I am not an elevated character, Julian ; your poor old father is only a kind of ruffian after all.’

‘To me, my dear father,’ says the son, ‘every word you utter, everything you do——’.

‘Of course, my dear boy ; I know all you would say. Many a son in your place—and a good son, too—would call his poor father a crackbrained old fellow ; and indeed, Julian, I should not contradict you ; I should do just the same myself ; I know my own weaknesses, Julian—no man better ; the Lord has sustained me marvellously against Paul, but I know my weaknesses—no man better.’

‘Except in respect of a little over-earnestness in the matter you mention, I don’t see that any one can really say——’

‘Of course, my dear boy, it is very good of you to think so. Although I really can’t agree with you about the over-earnestness, as you call it. You can’t very well be over-earnest, you know, in presence of a—poisonous snake ! Can you, now ?’

‘By the way, father ; they say Cousin Paul——’

‘He cuts you dead now, doesn’t he ?’

‘He evidently prefers that I should look the other way ; and really I don’t think it is

to be wondered at. Indeed, I feel it to be a relief.'

'I'm glad to hear you say so, boy.'

'Well, it is said that he is to be made a bishop.'

'A bishop? Oh yes! No doubt they will make him a bishop. Of course they will. Archbishop—Cardinal, my boy! If it comes to that, I hope to see Paul Saint-Paul—I do indeed—*Pope!* And then what will happen? Why, mark my words, Julian; the devil will get him. You see if he don't.'

'I hope not,' says the young man, smiling, in spite of himself, at the old partisan's vigour of speech.

'So do I,' replies his father; 'God knows I love Paul like my own flesh. But—but—my dear boy, the devil will have him in spite of us! If there is one truth more than another that is firmly, finally, and irrevocably impressed, fixed, and established in my mind, beyond the reach of argument, human or divine, it is that our poor Paul Saint-Paul—will—be—damned! It's of no use to debate the matter; it's settled!'

Strength of character, therefore, and virtue,

there obviously are in abundance in this tempestuous old clergyman ; but he says well that his son, ever dispassionate and gentle, possesses qualities of quite a different value. That he is a young man such as the world calls eccentric, it would be vain to deny ; but perhaps it is this very eccentricity that causes him, as one estranged from the lower world, to fix his eye upon the higher summits of manly virtue. Blameless in his deportment, patient in all efforts of well-doing, as guileless of heart as he is resolute of purpose, as modest as he is generous, Julian Saint-Paul, in these shifty times, odd as he may be, and quite unlikely to succeed in life, to marry well, to take a position in the county, or in any other intelligible way to do credit to his friends, is, in the opinion of every man who knows him, and every woman, one of nature's gentlemen.

At the time when the eye of his Excellency the Viscount Malign happens to rest upon him, in the anteroom of the Lady Aurora Dragonet, young Julian Saint-Paul has been for some years, in a certain sense, actively engaged in the practice of the medical profession. Not that the many well-wishers of his

family are in the habit of consulting him upon the not infrequent ailments incidental to their various modes of enjoying life ; nor that the general public have as yet begun to take notice of the modest brass plate which he has more recently been permitted to attach to the door of his lodgings ; but, nevertheless, he is as actively engaged every day he lives as if he were earning a good yearly income. It is enough for the present to explain that the field of his labour is Sweetbriar Gardens, a notable slum across the river, and that his services in that field are honorary. He is not even the parish doctor. In a word, he has taken a philanthropic and eccentric fancy to the place ; and to a person as odd as himself, if not more so, who acts the part of his ally, and, indeed, director, under the name of Sergeant Jollybuff.

‘Doctor,’ says the Sergeant, ‘look here ; let you and me keep on resisting of the devil, don’t you see, as we’re adoing, and the time may come when he will have clean flowed away from these here Gardins—clean away !’

CHAPTER XIV.

MADONNA.

MADONNA GAY, the youthful lady to whom, as it would seem, Julian Saint-Paul must be betrothed, is the niece and adopted child of a most worthy gentleman, who follows, as the sole pursuit of a somewhat eccentric old-bachelorhood, the fascinating science of archæology, and who, in recognition of an academical position eminently occupied in former days, holds the honourable title of *Emeritus Professor*. Madonna is little more than eighteen years of age. She is graceful and fair, as befits her time of life; and, to most observers, these considerations are enough; but Julian Saint-Paul perceives in her much more valuable qualities than these, and admires her with all the ardour of the first love of a lofty spirit, for indi-

cations of character as elevated as his own.

When the eyes of Viscount Malign rest upon the two young people as they stand at the Lady Aurora's anteroom-window, looking out upon the stars, and they thereupon turn again, with a blush upon their faces, towards the world which for a moment they had forgotten, his Excellency the Ambassador Extraordinary bows politely to them in passing, because he is struck with the appearance of both of them, and especially of the young man. His Excellency takes the trouble, before he leaves the house, to inquire who he is ; he further inquires the name of the lady ; and, as he goes homeward, his thoughts revert to them.

‘This, then, is Monsignore’s young cousin. No commonplace youth. Monsignore does well to say he is worthy of battle. Monsignore, like myself, is no fighter of frogs and mice. Monsignore knows his work, and he is my friend. This youth, he says, is to be—— Well, he shall be.—Monsignore knows why.—It is enough for me that he is worthy of battle ; I do not ask for reasons.

Monsignore's reasons would be as good as another's—or better.'

The Viscount has many things to think of. But again and again he cannot help returning to this reflection :

‘It must be done ; Monsignore knows why.—He has good reasons, no doubt. I do not inquire.—I have no time to explore the motives of a friend ; or the motives of a priest.’

‘It shall be done. It shall be done !’

CHAPTER XV.

MAKING LOVE.

‘SWEET Madonna, how tenderly I love you
—how tenderly I love you !

Here is an insane observation for any young woman to hear ! Madonna Gay, although she has had no mother since her childhood, has been prudently brought up by the Emeritus Professor ; and wisely lectured, as occasion offered, concerning the ways of the world she has to live in ; therefore she is not altogether of the common order of flighty, or of sentimental, girls of eighteen. But surely this is too much.

Julian Saint-Paul is seeing her home in a four-wheeled cab. The Emeritus Professor, her proper chaperon, having left the Lady Aurora Dragonet’s little reception prematurely, on some archæological

wild-goose-chase suddenly taking possession of his mind, has committed her to the special charge of the Lady Aurora; who in her turn has now bestowed upon the young physician, as an evidence of particular favour which no other young man of her acquaintance could possibly have received at her experienced hands, the agreeable charge of escorting the Professor's pretty niece to her uncle's dwelling in the Park.

‘Sweet Madonna!’ says Julian, therefore, taking her hand, ‘how tenderly I love you!’

Madonna, being by nature scarcely of a sprightly turn of mind, but not, therefore, slow at repartee, thinks for a single moment of meeting this outrageous intimation with a little banter; and, were it not for the circumstance that he is looking at her fingers instead of her face, Julian might see her bright eyes twinkle, and her lips part in a mischievous little smile. But Julian, after all, is not a man to be called a goose, or a dear old donkey, or a silly-billy, however affectionately; and, indeed, Madonna herself is not the girl to think of such undignified sport—except for a single instant, perhaps, while the

spirit of fair and frail Mother Eve, who was nobody's niece, might be supposed to be obscuring the higher principles of the niece of an Emeritus Professor. So, on the whole, the young lady thinks this answer the best :

‘Dear Julian,’ she says, ‘I’m afraid you will spoil me.’

Julian looks into her face and sighs. What else could he do ? No doubt he gently squeezes her hand. But as the cab now turns into the Park, it is too late to say more ; even if he has anything more to say—which is very doubtful.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE AMBASSADOR AT HOME.

IT is past midnight when his Excellency the Viscount Malign reaches his Sanctuary. He is alone, and passes along as if in deep thought until he pauses before the mimic world of crystal which stands in the midst of the apartment, sustained by the fair figures of Love—Love the Real, Love the Ideal—Love in the corroded silver daintily picked out with gold. And now the long grand gallery is dimly lighted up by a range of sconces on the wall, between the casements, their radiance subdued by cold blue opal shades.

Amongst the characteristic peculiarities of the Ambassador's remarkable chamber, there is this one more: that the windows, being without drapery, are closed at night by shutters, which constitute each window a

mirror from the floor upwards ; all being so delicately adjusted that the entire gallery is reflected in the form of its clear counterpart beyond, without a broken line or a blot. Now also, in the dim light, the polished marble-floor seems to lie in liquid repose, like the surface of a semi-pellucid lake, in whose chill depths, beneath what might be ice, the twice-told vision is again repeated, as something nebulous, immaterial, and ungravitating, hanging between earth and heaven, out of which the whole weird spectacle above has sprung.

In this strange light, and in the absolute silence, the ghostly company of figures which pervade the Sanctuary are all the more mysterious. The shadowy trains of men and women on the arched ceiling are more dim and shadowy ; the silver stars more frigid and pale in the darker blue. The four solemn Seasons are more solemn, flanking the unilluminated chapels of the withered flowers. The fair figures of Love are more forlorn in their soiled silver and gold. The colossal men of mark and metal, looking forth more sternly and menacingly from their long

arcade of niches in the wall, are reflected in the vision opposite as an array of fierce and mighty sentinels set to watch in an outer chamber—the antechamber of the immeasurable halls of Night. As the master of this inhospitable host, high-priest of this Temple of Desolation, moves with silent footfall down the midst, all eyes follow him wistfully in the cold light, like eyes of despair. And before the altars, if altars they be, and under the black vaults above, the sacrificial priests support their fountains almost in shadow; while from the jaws of the serpents the red aromatic spray ascends still noiselessly but without ceasing, as if it were the dark blood of the slain.

The attendant who has marshalled his Excellency from the entrance of the mansion to the door of this hall of melancholy grandeur is a man of an aspect not out of keeping with the rest; Keops by name, a dark lithe creature of the Upper Nile, of slender figure and stony countenance. His dress is a gown of black. His jetty hair and beard are tinged with grey. His black eyes burn like half-extinguished coals. Yellow eyeballs, tawny

hands, and a narrow collar of linen, alone relieve his dismal colour. He has led the way to the Sanctuary in utter silence ; opened the door without a sound ; and retired as he closed it, like something from the grave.

But as his Excellency the Ambassador Extraordinary, thus entering his private chamber, approaches, although noiselessly, the monumental horologe in the midst, there rises up from the floor a living figure as if aroused from sleep.

‘ Ah ! fair Lady Lais, art thou there ?’ says the Viscount Malign. But he is regarding intently the mimic world of daylight and night before which he stands, as if in ever-deepening thought ; thinking perhaps what an odd little world it is, whether in daylight or in night.

‘ Ah ! fair Lais,’ he continues, but altogether absently, ‘ dost thou not bid me welcome ?’ And he holds out his hand.

This is a beautiful wild beast, a puma, of small size and exquisite form, slender as a snake, in colour so dark as to be of a lustrous deep blue velvet grey. But her welcome is equivocal ; she shrinks from the proffered

hand, shows her long white teeth, and hisses forth the spiteful aspirate of the feline tribe. It may be something in the Viscount's manner that affects her instincts ; for it is certain that he is in some way much discomposed in mind to-night.

‘ Fair lady,’ he continues, still thoughtful, ‘ why so coy ?’

The animal, receding from his touch, bounds aside with a vicious snarl, as if he might carry blood upon his hand.

‘ Feminine only, sweet Lais ; only feminine after all ; capricious as the wind.’ Still absorbed in thought, he speaks almost mechanically. ‘ Come to me, soft ungentle beauty, come !

Crouching beneath the shelter of a table, the wild creature, with glaring eyes fixed wickedly upon him, and yet in utter fear, makes no answer.

Viscount Malign, casting off at length his preoccupation of mind, turns his eyes upon her ; but not unkindly yet. ‘ Come hither, Lais,’ he says, with more authority.

Creeping along the floor, the beautiful savage crouches at his feet ; submits for a

moment to be caressed ; but, as he turns away, starts from him with a bound, and glides along under the feet of the men of mark and metal, to seek a shelter at the remote extremity of the gallery, behind one of the altars of the withered flowers. ‘What is thy trouble, Lais?’ says his Excellency. ‘Dost thou scent mischief, fair fury, in the wind?’

Seating himself now upon a couch, Viscount Malign falls into an attitude of profound abstraction, as if he pondered over some increasing difficulty.

‘It grows late,’ he says ; ‘by this time he ought to have been here.’

Rising presently from his seat, he paces up and down the whole length of the gallery, muttering from time to time.

‘I hesitate,’ he murmurs. ‘We do not angle for minnows ;—but I hesitate.—And I seldom hesitate.

‘Monsignore,’ he continues, ‘no doubt has his reasons ; but—I wish—I wish I could spare the maiden.

‘O merciless !’ he exclaims again, ‘O merciless !—why persecute such noble youth ?’

Pausing several times, as if to refresh his

nostrils with the incense of the aromatic fountains at the ends of the gallery, the Viscount Malign walks thus for an hour or more—almost in agitation.

In the range of mirrors which now occupy one side of the long apartment, he looks upon the reflection of his own grand form, as if it were some one else wandering up and down—in solitude and sorrow. One by one as he passes them, the figures in the outer chamber beyond—the Nero, the Caligula, the Herod and the Attila, the Timour, the Nadir, the Borgia, the Visconti, the Philip of the Inquisition, the Charles of Saint Bartholomew's Day, the Torquemada, the Alva—the men of mark and metal, majesty and might—glare on him through the chill blue air like every one a god of murder. Above there are the dim grey ghostly lines of men and women, all amongst the silver stars; kings, prophets, judges, priests and heroes; histrios and fools, scribes and pharisees hypocrites; princesses of love and beauty, queens of pride and pomp, sirens, traitresses, courtesans; victors and vanquished, torturers and tortured, tyrants and

slaves ; truly an incomprehensible company—moving so solemnly from clouds and mystery past to clouds and mystery to come ! In the four corners of the gallery he sees the blighted beauty of the Jezebel, the Delilah, the Sapphira, the Herodias, all as if hushed by his approach, and watching forlorn his stately footfall. The wife of Potiphar, too, and the woman whose goodman was not at home, seem to cower as he passes them, and to tremble. In one of the gloomy alcoves, crouching against the farthest wall, partly hidden by the altar-stone, lies Lais the puma, motionless but watchful, her green eyes fixed, her white fangs glistening. Under the floor reversed, like a necromantic cavern, the whole sinister spectacle is produced again, as if in mockery. And all in utter silence ; not even the movement of his footstep can be heard.

‘ Why does he not come ? ’ says the Ambassador.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE VISITOR.

THE faint tinkle of a bell within the gallery at length attracts attention.

In answer to this signal, the Ambassador touches a button on the wall. One of the doors —they are in the alcoves—opens ; Keops enters.

Lais moves towards him ; sniffs at his robe, as if there were some taint in the outer air.

‘ Monsignore Saint-Paul,’ says Keops, in a soft and melancholy voice, glancing uneasily around him. Even Keops is not proof, it would appear, against the influence of the Sanctuary by night.

‘ Let him enter.’

Lais passes swiftly to the farther alcove, and into the shadow, out of which her emerald eyes gleam like stars.

There enters the popular divine. He wears a riding-coat, and carries his hat in his hand. In the Sanctuary of Mount Medusa, and in the presence of Viscount Malign, his ever-pleasing features are less composed, perhaps, and his complexion less ruddy than usual; but his bearing, notwithstanding a slight stoop indicating conciliation—possibly diplomacy—is still as dignified and commanding as that of so great a churchman ought to be.

Not until swarthy Keops has retired and closed the door does either the Viscount or his visitor utter a word.

‘Welcome, Monsignore,’ now says the Ambassador, inviting him to be seated on a couch, and looking a long way off.

‘At your service always, my dear Viscount,’ replies the priest, with a courtly smile, but with the same stony stare.

It can scarcely escape the notice of the owner of the Sanctuary that his guest, frequently as he may have entered this sumptuous apartment before, cannot now pass its threshold without a deprecating glance around upon the dread array of ghostlike figures that

environ him. A faint smile plays upon the features of his Excellency.

(‘Why has the Viscount sent for me?’ is the thought of Monsignore; ‘his manner is strange.’)

(‘Monsignore is alarmed,’ is the thought of the Viscount; ‘his conscience is uneasy.’)

As Monsignore seats himself towards the middle of the gallery, a low menacing growl is heard from the farther alcove. Monsignore has heard such a salutation before, but he starts nevertheless.

(‘Yes,’ is the thought of the Ambassador, ‘he is certainly disturbed.’)

‘Fair Lais,’ he says aloud, ‘seeks to attract the attention of a friend.’

The puma rises up—encouraged possibly by something in the tone of voice—and, with her teeth displayed and the point of her long tail ominously vibrating, comes slowly creeping towards the visitor, under cover of what lies in her path. Her master being pleased to make no sign, the vicious beauty approaches the stranger within leaping distance, and is actually poising herself for a spring!

Looking somewhat anxiously for only a single moment in the impassive face of the Viscount Malign, Monsignore Saint-Paul compresses his lips, and slightly raises his cane. The eyes of the wild beast flash fire at the challenge; but the eyes of the priest are calm and resolute. He despairs to call upon his host for protection: Monsignore Saint-Paul asks no one's protection. In whatever strait, he is prepared to protect himself; although it is a saying of his that he relies upon Heaven's protection, and that of Holy Church—no other in the world or out of it—no other!

‘*Lais*,’ says Viscount Malign quietly, ‘come hither.’

The animal creeps to his feet like a lithe serpent; looks up wistfully, although wildly, in his serene, colourless face. She is entreating her master for permission to fly at the throat of the visitor. Other visitors there sometimes are whom the fair Lady *Lais* will regard with indifference; in Monsignore Saint-Paul there may possibly be something cat-like which the instinct of the wild cat cannot brook.

‘Go, little beauty, go!’ says her master; and she withdraws again to the alcove, spitting at intervals on the way, and lying down at last with a low growl—almost a groan—of wicked anger. ‘Fie, fair Lais!’ muses the Viscount Malign, ‘to snarl at the anointed!—this with a laugh. ‘Monsignore can scarcely fail to be flattered,’ continues the Viscount gaily.

‘Pshaw!’ replies the priest, taking snuff, ‘it is the way of the world, my dear Viscount—only the way of the world. You and I have no need to exchange sentiments upon that.’

‘No,’ replies the Viscount; ‘you and I know the world, Monsignore Saint-Paul—we know the world pretty well.’

‘We do,’ answers Monsignore—‘we do.’ (He would fain go on to say, ‘Why am I sent for?’)

‘I saw your young physician to-night,’ says the Ambassador, ‘at my Lady Aurora’s.’

‘At my Lady Aurora’s?’ (He now knows why he has been sent for.)

‘Yes,’ says the Ambassador; ‘my lady is a charming woman.’

‘My lady, as a woman, may show her teeth, I dare to say, upon occasion,’ says Monsignore with a smile, holding out his snuffbox, ‘like the vicious she-cat in yon corner; but she is indeed a charming woman.’

‘For shame! for shame!’ says the Viscount, as he takes the box; ‘Monsignore is not angry with a poor she-cat? The beautiful creature is but feminine, after all. Poor Lady Lais! all feminine—all feminine, and no more.’

‘True,’ replies Monsignore, with what is half a sneer and half the affectation of a smile; ‘but what are the news from the Eternal City, Viscount Malign?’ (‘Why cannot he come to the point?’)

‘Does your Reverence mean from Rome? Your Reverence is generally so far very well informed. What are your own news from Rome?’

‘His Holiness is slightly indisposed, I hear. Do you approve this snuff?’

‘Excellent, Monsignore; excellent indeed. So his Holiness is slightly indisposed?’ (‘And Monsignore is considerably troubled.’)

‘ It comes all the way from the Corso.’
(‘ This must mean mischief.’)

The Ambassador bows, still looking a long way off. ‘ All the way from the Corso,’ he says ‘—from the Corso.’

‘ His Holiness suffers from insomnia,’ says Monsignore. (‘ What can it be ?’)

‘ The holy Pontiff,’ says his Excellency, ‘ like yourself and me, has his mind much occupied with grave affairs ; which well may be allowed to banish sleep.’

‘ True, your Excellency ; and what may be the intelligence from—the Grand Duchy ? His Royal Highness has waited long.’

‘ A most exemplary young prince, Monsignore Saint-Paul. By the way, I saw your young physician to-night.’

‘ And how did you like him, Viscount Malign ?’

‘ Greatly. He is magnificent.’

‘ An attractive young man, your Excellency.’ (‘ What is the matter ?’)

‘ Monsignore Saint-Paul,’ says the Viscount thoughtfully, ‘ your young cousin—had—a lady on his arm.’

Monsignore starts ; he must be very much

indeed at a loss, or he would not answer as he now does.

‘His mother, probably; no doubt it was his mother, Viscount.’

‘His mother?’

‘Oh no; his mother is—is in heaven; I had forgotten his mother.’

‘Monsignore!’ says the Ambassador Extraordinary, with something like impatience; and in an unthinking moment the priest allows their eyes to meet.

He rises and would take his leave.

Lais leaps from her lair!

‘Let us come to business,’ says his Excellency—almost in a whisper.

The priest, with a visible shudder, resumes his seat.

‘The young man,’ says Viscount Malign, ‘interests me. He has an air, not of brute courage, but of virtue. I hesitate to strike this lordly youth!’

Monsignore knows now why he has been sent for. But he is one of those men who, when brought to bay, recover themselves promptly.

‘Were it but mere courage,’ he says,

slowly, 'he would be unworthy of your attention, dear Viscount Malign ; and of mine. It is his virtue that may—shall I say—triumph ?'

' Does Monsignore Saint-Paul esteem me so meanly—— ?'

' Pardon me, Viscount, I entreat you. I apologise for the words—mere words ; pray do not suppose they were meant to imply a taunt.'

Viscount Malign laughs airily, as he rises from his seat and paces the floor.

' What matters,' he says, ' one more or less ? The Church, I suppose, my very dear Monsignore Saint-Paul—ha ha !—the Church must be avenged !'

Monsignore takes snuff, and hands the box to the Ambassador with a slight bow—waving his hand.

' So be it, then,' says the Viscount ; ' why should I flinch ? Shall it be the World, your Reverence ? or the Flesh ? or—what shall it be, Monsignore Saint-Paul ?'

' So that the Church, my dear Viscount Malign, is satisfied, and her interests vindicated—I for my poor part——'

‘Most certainly. The Church—shall be avenged.’

‘His father—’

‘You shall be avenged, Monsignore! The young man interests me; so much the better, you shall be avenged. Suppose we say—poverty?’

‘He would cast it aside like a feather—like the web of a spider tying Samson’s hands.’

‘Sickness?—But sickness is a vulgar test, Monsignore; shall we say gold? Few seem to withstand gold.—The one thing I can never comprehend.’

The Viscount laughs, and laughs again, contemptuously.

‘Julian Saint-Paul covetous? He would scarcely take your gold into his hand; certainly not keep it.’

‘Ambition, then, your Reverence? You know something of ambition.’

‘I, your Excellency?’

‘Call it glory; aggrandisement; self-esteem; emulation; heroic jealousy; a sense supreme of merit. All these have power over man; which shall we say?’

‘Toys, mere toys. Try something else, Viscount Malign.’

‘Oh, Monsignore, certainly we will try something else! It is given to every man to withstand allurement—from this quarter—from that—perhaps from many; but one point of the compass there shall always be by whose peculiar breath he is to be overthrown. Hell, dear Monsignore Saint-Paul, is peopled with souls that have resisted all possible enticements—save but one!’

‘No doubt, your Excellency,’ replies the divine, looking a long way off; ‘no doubt your Excellency knows. One point of the compass to every man? Indeed? Then I shall be vastly interested to know, in my young cousin’s case, what point of the compass this may be.’

‘If I hesitate, Monsignore—do you not understand me?—The young man had—he had a lady on his arm.’

‘A polite young man; perhaps gallant; but an elderly lady, I hope, Viscount, or one of middle age.’

‘A sweet young girl, your Reverence—like a spring flower.’

‘Ah ! such things will be.’

‘And he had her on his arm.’

‘No doubt.’

‘Perhaps he is, Monsignore——?’

‘Poor fool ! perhaps he is.’

Lais is stealing along the shadow towards the priest ; in the mirrors opposite gliding like a streak of deeper shadow—carrying two lamps of living hell-fire in her treacherous face !

‘Lais,’ cries the Ambassador softly, ‘come hither, beauty.’

The puma comes to his call ; lays her vicious head upon his knee ; turns her fierce eyes full upon the visitor.

Monsignore is composed, but thoughtful.

‘May I offer your Excellency,’ says he, looking afar off, ‘my box again ? I take the trouble to have it supplied all the way from the Corso.’

The Ambassador bows as he does honour once more to the politeness of so great a lord of the Church ; but Lais hisses and snarls as Monsignore smiles. Monsignore would fain empty the snuff-box over her wicked eyes ; but he still smiles instead.

‘But indeed—indeed I hesitate,’ says Viscount Malign—‘indeed I hesitate.’

‘I can quite appreciate your Excellency’s feeling of hesitation,’ says Monsignore, ‘quite. Believe me, my dear Viscount Malign——’

‘And I, Monsignore, can quite appreciate your Reverence’s feelings of—just and virtuous——’

‘Hatred? Nay, Viscount Malign; nay, nay, your Excellency; it is the function of my sacred office to love—and still to love.’

‘No doubt, Monsignore. I remember; we are but to try the mettle of this young spark—to try it all in love. Oh yes, certainly, let it be all in love.’

‘Not in hatred, surely, my dear Viscount. Heaven forbid it! Not in hatred of him, but certainly in love.’

‘Well, it is not I who love him.’

‘The son of the friend of my youth, Viscount Malign,’ says the priest, taking snuff.

‘So you have told me, Monsignore.’

‘Since, by the blessing of God, I was led to turn from the unstable heresy of schism to the firm assurance of our ancient faith, that friend no doubt has forsaken me.’

‘Despised you a little, I have understood ?’

‘Despised me much ; denounced me.’

‘He is angry ; you forgive him.’

‘Oh yes, I forgive him, Viscount. Oh ! I forgive him.—Let me offer you my box again.—I have suffered much, but—I forgive him. Let me rather say I might have suffered much, but—I have been sustained.’

‘Monsignore Saint-Paul,’ exclaims the Ambassador Extraordinary, rising almost impulsively from his seat, and pacing the marble floor again, ‘you and I are—intimates. I permit you to know—and to understand—But—Suffice it to say, Monsignore, you do not permit me to understand you ! In one word, I like an honest hater. The old bear has struck you, and you would strike the cub ! Say so ; it is the way of the world.’

‘No doubt, your Excellency, his father—’

‘There is no combatant so cruel as a discourteous priest, I know.’

‘Cruel, no doubt,’ continues Monsignore ; ‘although for myself I think nothing of such small trials as courtesy. Thank Heaven and Holy Church, I am in my poor person

proof against all such enmity of the world. Forgiveness, dear Viscount Malign, is the first stepping-stone to peace, across the troubled stream of human strife. He who has learnt the lessons of the Church—the Church which has no controversies and no misgivings—passes over the waters of malice dry-shod, where others are engulfed in the waves.'

‘To see a good man struggling with adversity,’ says the Ambassador Extraordinary, not without a sneer, but as if he mused in an undertone, ‘is a spectacle for angels! But indeed—I hesitate, Monsignore; I hesitate in spite of myself.’

‘Deal gently with him, then, dear Viscount Malign; for—for my sake; if—if it be possible.’

‘And yet, to see virtue victor, Monsignore, as you were pleased to hint——’

‘Yes, it is indeed a grand spectacle, your Excellency; even if we pity all the while the hero of the strife.’

‘We enjoy the pastime, you would say, Monsignore; we pity the player.’

‘Not pastime, dear Viscount; not enjoyment. We witness the fight, no doubt, and

commiserate the fighter. The blessed saints themselves in heaven do so.'

'I have heard that before.'

'The victory of virtue, my dear Viscount, may in this sense perhaps be called the pastime of heaven.'

'And its defeat, Monsignore, would be—the pastime of——?'

Monsignore shrugs his shoulders. 'Say of—of our poor earth.'

'At all events, it is a fine sport.'

'A glorious conflict, your Excellency.'

'Well worth the expenditure of a little—what shall we call it, Monsignore ?'

'Your Excellency may say discomposure of mind.'

'On the part, of course, of the patient, regarded as a strong suffering soul.'

'Of course.'

'And when another soul, not perhaps so strong, must share the suffering ?'

'I do not see how it can be helped, my dear Viscount Malign ; one soul more or less—as your Excellency hinted—what shall I say?'

'Nothing more, Monsignore, nothing more, I think. No more need be said.'

‘It is but Nature’s rule, dear Viscount, to work by waste.’

‘No more need be said, I think, Monsignore [Saint-Paul ; no more need be said, I am sure. Have you had the pleasure of seeing —the—the fair Countess Titania lately ?

Monsignore starts in his chair. ‘Ha !’ he mutters, ‘I had never thought of this.’

Viscount Malign, looking into the utter distance, is not unobservant of this start ; not oblivious to these muttered words. ‘Have you seen the—sweet Countess Titania lately,’ he repeats, ‘dear Monsignore Saint-Paul ?

‘Not lately, Viscount.’ But Monsignore begins to tremble.

‘A charming woman.’

‘Oh yes ; a most—a most—fascinating creature.’

‘You are—her—confessor, I believe ?’

The priest, in spite of his excitement, smiles.

‘The pretty creature does not tell you all, I fear.’

‘For shame, dear Viscount Malign !’ But still he trembles.

‘A weeping penitent, I should suppose ;

and requiring so very much of one's kind absolution that in sheer pity for her pretty face——'

Monsignore rises as if he were at length officially offended by such freedom of speech.

‘But a delightful woman, Monsignore.’

‘A delightful woman, my dear Viscount, a most fascinating woman.—No one could help admiring the Countess Titania.—I had not thought of the Countess Titania.’ Monsignore not only is looking a long way off, but he has turned pale with agitation and is forgetting himself.

‘And her equally charming brother, dear Monsignore Saint-Paul,—the exquisite Count Oberon ?

Monsignore staggers as if he would fall ; shivers to his very bones ; but the hand of his assiduous host is ready to support him.

‘My floor is slippery,’ says Viscount Malign ; ‘there are many who can scarcely keep their feet upon it sometimes.’

Lais utters a low plaintive whine.

The hand of Viscount Malign strikes icy cold ; but the strong will of the priest, sick at heart as he is, recalls his energies for a

moment, recalls them indeed to more generous purpose.

‘Slippery—with the blood of men, Viscount Malign !’

‘Alas, Monsignore Saint-Paul ! and—with the tears of women.’

‘Avaunt !’ exclaims the priest, although in a weak and quavering voice ; ‘Tempter ! avaunt !’

But the Ambassador has touched the button on the wall, and Keops is within the door—stolid as a stone.

‘Farewell, dear Monsignore Saint-Paul,’ says the Viscount airily, ‘and a pleasant ride homeward. It is late, my dear friend, very late ; take very much care of thyself ; thou art precious—the world hath not many like thee, my dear friend. Farewell, dear Monsignore Saint-Paul, farewell, and a pleasant ride homeward.’

CHAPTER XVIII.

PRIESTLY REFLECTIONS.

MONSIGNORE SAINT-PAUL rides homeward from Mount Medusa. It is a clear moonless night; the stars glittering like ten thousand sparks struck from an anvil, and fixed by some mysterious influence in the air.

‘Ten thousand Suns of Heaven !

Monsignore’s horse finds his own way along the well-known road; the rider reins him in to a walk.

‘Before whose bright immeasurable majesty—set in the infinite ether—this little pellet !—And we—*we* !—A pinch of animated dust !—That must be Sirius.—And that, great Jupiter divine !—Bah ! what do we know—what can we know ?’

But if Monsignore Saint-Paul is disposed to moralise, his steed is of a different mind,

and would make the best of his way home-ward. The rider still reins him in.

‘A dexterous thought of the Viscount’s. I am no bungler in diplomacy, but I had not dreamt of this.—He was a little flaxen-haired boy, and used to call me Cousin Paul—oh, how long ago!—And he will resist, the Viscount means to say, like a heroic fighter of the ancient days—resist perhaps successfully the very powers of hell, that blow about the rest of men like leaves in autumn!—Why should I persecute the boy? He used to call me Cousin Paul—dear Cousin Paul—O God! how long ago!—I wish—I wish I had not entered on it.—Recede?—The Church never recedes; the priest is never in the wrong. Outraged Heaven never forgets; its insulted servants never forgive!—But I had not thought of the Countess Titania.—A little fair-haired boy, and called me Cousin Paul!—None but a fiend could have ever thought of Oberon!—A sweet young maiden, doubtless, such as he should love; no common simpering toy, but such as he should love.—The Viscount hesitates; and I—why should I hate the boy? He

used to sit upon my knee, and call me—

‘Can this be tears?—And yonder must be Sirius; and there old Jupiter!—And we—a pinch of pestilent dust!

‘Shall I suffer, and not see my desire upon mine enemy? No, no, no! this was never the mind of the Church. Let me stand in the ancient ways—the priest endures no wrong!

‘And hell is filled, he says, with those who have successfully resisted all possible temptations save but one?—And yonder is Sirius—and yonder Jupiter—and *we*!—Bah! away with such childish fooling! What is Sirius to me?—Or Jupiter?—Or Heaven—or Hell? Earth is enough for man!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE VISCOUNT'S REFLECTIONS.

‘O LOVE of man!’ cries Viscount Malign, pacing his marble floor in solitude, ‘of all mysterious impulses in Heaven or Earth the most mysterious and divine! The love of motherhood, passionate and all-enduring, is not so wonderful as this; the beasts that perish have it to the full, in simple instinct. The love of woman for her lord is but submissiveness; it has no strength but in its weakness. But the love of a youth for a maiden—oh, broad and blind and strong! as when great ocean follows the sweet moon!’

Lais, attending on his footsteps silently, looks up into his face as if with pity.

‘Yes, beauty,’ patting her soft brow, ‘thou art glad the priest is gone.—Why not let thee fly at his throat?—His blood might

harm thee, Lais, and I should be sorry.'
And he sits down, almost wearily.

'But I must pass to my work,' exclaims the Ambassador Extraordinary, rising again instantly, 'I must do my work, for I have much of it to do.'

CHAPTER XX.

DREAMS.

IN the experience of every one there are occasions when the mind for a moment, even in broad day, appears to wander and be lost. Returning to consciousness, the continuity of existence seems to have been broken. Memory fails to find her record of what has happened. But there is a vague sense of having been elsewhere—a vague remembrance of something said and yet not said, something done and yet not done. The actual duration of this parenthesis of life is nothing at all. It is not the progression of time that is in question, neither is it the extension of space.

But there is neither time nor space, they tell us, in eternity ; all is here and nothing yonder ; all is now, and nothing then ; a

day is as a thousand years, a thousand years are as a day.

In a dream, again they tell us, when sleep has been measured by only moments, the vision may be one of long long years. Why may not the momentary oblivion of the waking mind be a slumber in eternity, with its own dreams?

His Excellency the Ambassador Extraordinary contemplates his horologe. Europe and the north are all in darkness ; the light is shining upon southern seas. Upon an island lying like one's hand in the deepest of the shadow, there is a spot less than a lentil. This is the great Metropolis of Empire.

'And it contains millions of them ! And every one taught to hold himself a demigod !'

'A pinch,' says Monsignore Saint-Paul at the moment, 'of pestilent dust !'

Two powerful intelligences have struck fire from each other ; and it is very much the same fire.

Viscount Malign, standing still in the midst of his Sanctuary, and listening, as it might be intently, whispers the name of Julian Saint-Paul.

The person thus called may happen to

answer the Ambassador's summons or he may not. Julian does not answer.

The Viscount, as if slightly disappointed, pauses for a few moments more, and then utters the name of Madonna Gay.

The figure of the young girl becomes visible. She recognises the stranger whom she saw this evening at the assembly.

'Oh, the touch of his hand was delight!' she says. (Such things occur in dreams.) 'What a strange mystery is love! But who are you that witnessed the sweet indiscretion?'

'Fear me not, O fair child!' answers the Viscount Malign; 'unless you cherish secret thoughts that may not be revealed, never fear me.'

'I have no secret thoughts, sir; none unless they be those of love; and surely a young maiden may have a lover.'

'No doubt she may. Love—love—redeems the world!'

The eyes of Madonna fall upon the two figures in silver, that are corroded but daintily gilt.

'Who,' she says, 'are these?'

‘They are nothing to you, sweet child,’ replies his Excellency, ‘nothing to you ; you are all too young and innocent for that.’

‘My lover,’ says the maiden, ‘is a lordly man ; I am content to worship him. If Heaven will indeed grant him to me in its great grace, I will be the queen of his life, and yet his faithful handmaid. In mature life we will train up children in duty and honour. In old age we will twine our grey hair together. In the tomb we will sleep side by side. God grant it all, if it be not too much.’

‘It is too much surely,’ says Viscount Malign ; ‘how can you alone be happy ?’

‘Alas ! what you say is true.’

‘It is enough if you are united at all ; the way before you both is dark.’

‘He is all I esteem in the world, kind sir. To be his, and he mine, is all I seek ; I will hazard the rest.’

‘You hazard much, fair girl, you hazard much. When the cares and troubles of this cruel world gather over and around ; when custom cloys the sense of mutual regard, till the lover becomes grave and severe and the

love petulant and wilful ; when he is angry and harsh, and she resentful and defiant ; when prosperity estranges in its pride or adversity cankers with its corroding curse——'

‘Oh, I will love him still,’ she exclaims ; ‘be assured that I will love him still !’

‘And he ?’

‘Alas ! may man love like woman ? But let us hope our destinies shall scarcely be so clouded as you say.’

The young girl bursts into tears, and in an instant has vanished !

Madonna Gay, clear as is her conscience, is passing a sleepless night. As she starts up out of a moment’s forgetfulness, she sobs aloud ; the inflexible face of Viscount Malign is seen in the darkness, and she trembles with the cold.

The Ambassador resumes his promenade up and down the gallery.

‘Strange world !’ he says ; ‘ever the same. Learning nothing from age to age but haply a few more symbols here and there of one doubtful alphabet and another, whereby to read the surfaces of things ; the inner essence and the inner life still unexplored as ever.

Forgetting nothing, except a little of the half-formed virtues of half-savage men ; not even forgetting the very meanest of their vices. Hoping still in youth's heyday for halcyon life ; disappointed still in manhood, womanhood, age, as it has always been ; yet hoping again anew the self-same hopes, to be once more inevitably crushed with the self-same defeat. I pity this poor gentle woman-child. O Love !—O Life !—O Death !—O my—sad—embassy !

The Ambassador paces again up and down the floor ; recovers himself ; calls once more upon Julian Saint-Paul. The noble figure of Julian appears.

‘Ah ! Viscount,’ says the young man gallantly (such things occur in dreams), ‘bid me a welcome to-night, for I am glad !’

‘Welcome,’ replies his Excellency ; ‘most welcome.’

‘I would wish to indite a poem on love ; can you assist me ? You know, I hope, what it is.’

‘The poem has been too often already written ; the song too often sung.’

‘But let us sing it at least once more. O love ! Heaven's mystery ! Thou sweetest,

softest gift! thou purest thought! thou happiest vision in eternity! Soul blent with soul because lip touches lip; life all absorbed in life because but hand and hand thrill as they press each other!

‘Nay, nay, young man; thou art no puling school-girl; look around with the eyes of a man, and tell me truly what love is when in fruition—such as thou and I have seen it.’

‘You push me hard, cruel Viscount. Of what stern power are you Ambassador, thus harshly to question the ever fair if ever futile trust of youth?’

‘Nay, answer me, Julian Saint-Paul; thine embassy, as a physician, is at all events in the cause of sober fact and not of fallacy; what species of love did we meet at the Lady Aurora’s to-night?’

‘Alas! you force my thoughts, Viscount; and I say again you are cruel. But I well know you are not to be denied.’

‘I am not to be denied.’

‘What species of love did we see? Perhaps there were not so many wholesome men and women there as might have been.—But why should I say so?’

‘Perhaps not so many.’

‘Love had grown cold in most of them, I fear.—But what is this to me?’

‘Old man and old woman,’ says the Ambassador, ‘if any longer allies at all, bent together on some selfish purpose almost by accident; like hounds that run in couples and no more.—But go thou on with the tale.’

‘The engagements of callous youth,’ says Julian, ‘too often at the best like the mercantile transactions of astute age.—But why should I say so?’

‘Go on,’ repeats his Excellency, laughing aloud, ‘go on.’

‘Fathers and mothers in their very prime ceasing to regard each other—unless it may be as enemies—but for one still more mysterious instinct, the inexplicable affection of the parent for the little child.’

‘Well said, no doubt,’ replies the Ambassador; ‘but let us keep to our subject.’

‘The carefully adjusted devotion of not so long ago abandoning its object by mutual consent!—But what is this—Viscount Malign?—Am I myself?’

The Viscount points to the pair of fair ladies in silver, daintily picked out with gold, and, as Julian looks at them, laughs again aloud.

‘Too true,’ says the youth ; ‘too solemnly and miserably true. The simple girl—no, never simple—the modest—but scarcely modest—too highly trained for either—well, the unsophisticated—no—inexperienced—no—But why do I speak thus harshly ?’

‘Say unmarried,’ interposes the Viscount.

‘The unmarried girl, then, of three or four short years ago—in spite of motherhood—’

‘Speak not of motherhood, I pray,’ says his Excellency ; ‘it only confuses the matter.’

‘Stung—let us hope for motherhood’s sad sake—stung to revenge by his neglect, and worse, the echoes of whose vows—have scarce died out, seeks treacherous refuge in another’s passion ; while he who was her idol—perhaps for his whiskers or his eyelashes—Is there a spell upon me ?’

‘Bravo !’ exclaims the Ambassador, ‘thou shalt be an orator !’

‘He has forgotten only one of many passions, Viscount ; and easily forgets the formal promises of one unthinking marriage day.—But, Viscount, why do I say all this ?’

‘Well said again,’ exclaims his Excellency ; ‘now let us turn to younger people still. Call to mind the son of a poor gentleman and the fair daughter of a certain not too wealthy noble, who stood for a moment once exchanging the cold courtesies of fashion, with all eyes bent upon them.’

‘Ah yes ; unfortunate !’

‘Very ; say wicked—villanous !’

‘No, I will say unfortunate. But yesterday I knew them betrothed, and happy in their hope. There came a keen old woman-of-the-world, but a mother—God will forgive her because she was a mother—’

‘Nay, I tell thee, nay.’

‘Well, be it so, or be it not, she had a daughter to settle, as they say ; and the daughter, with a long purse—But what is all this to me ?—She took a fancy to the lover ; and the mother—God will forgive her because of sacred motherhood—’

‘No ! I tell thee, no !’

‘Well, Viscount, I cannot say ; but the mother bought him at a price in money, and the maiden’s heart is broken !—But I am sick of this.’

‘Nay, nay, Julian Saint-Paul, I will not be denied ; go forward with the solemn truth.’

‘The forsaken girl has a broken heart ; but she must wear a smiling lip. She rouges her pale cheek ; shakes hands with her lost lover most genteelly ; speaks the platitudes of chattering fashion with him ; while he—But why, Viscount Malign — ?’

‘What does he do ?’

‘He is bought and sold, Viscount Malign ; what can he do ?’

‘Curse him, Julian Saint-Paul ! By thy virtue—curse him !’

‘Nay, I do not curse.’

‘Then in his fate—behold—— !’

‘Never !’ cries the young man, ‘never, never !’ and with a wild scream of agony he disappears !

When Julian Saint-Paul leaps up in bed out of a fierce attack of nightmare, the cold sweat stands upon his forehead and runs

down his cheek, and his limbs shake as with an ague.

‘What a horrible dream!’ he says, ‘what a horrible dream!’

‘But this is wasted time,’ says his Excellency the Ambassador Extraordinary, Minister Plenipotentiary; ‘this is wasted time, and I have much to do to-night.’

CHAPTER XXI.¹

THE EMERITUS PROFESSOR.

IN the morning the lovers meet on some incidental occasion and are for a few minutes alone together.

‘Who is the strange person,’ says Madonna, ‘that we saw last night? I have been thinking of him a good deal.’

‘Ah! a strange person indeed,’ answers Julian, ‘and I have been dreaming of him; and awoke, indeed, from the dream as if I had come out of battle.’

‘I hope,’ says the girl, ‘I hope he is not our enemy.’

‘I hope not.’

‘We have done him no wrong, surely.’

‘It takes no wrong, dear Madonna, to make an enemy; I am not superstitious, but I must admit that I fear the Viscount Malign.

When his eyes fell upon me last night—I trembled.'

'So did I, dear Julian; who is he?'

'No one can tell. He is his Excellency the Viscount Malign, a most stately personage, of vast resources and illimitable astuteness, Ambassador Extraordinary—so they whisper—'

'Oh! here comes my dear uncle,' says Madonna; and Professor Gay enters the room.

'Well, Julian, my dear boy, how wags the world to-day?' exclaims the Professor in a jaunty way that is usual with him.

'Merrily enough, dear sir,' answers Julian, 'merrily enough.'

'Ay, merrily enough, I doubt not,' says the Professor; 'so long as there is dancing afoot, men and women will be found to dance; the young with light hearts because with light purses, and the old with aching shoulders although they may carefully conceal their burdens. I imagine it must have been always so; I see no evidence in the books of anything to the contrary.'

Professor Gay, Fellow, of course, of the

Society of Antiquaries, is at this time about fifty-five; in appearance perhaps a good deal older; in manners thought to be younger. Some people whose language is not sufficiently polite will plainly pronounce him to be a conceited old fellow; but as to this the reader must judge. Talkative he certainly is; very short-sighted, and not a little self-satisfied; that he is wise he himself is thoroughly convinced. No doubt it is for this very reason that he makes a point of cultivating what he considers to be warmth and elasticity of speech. 'But for a little harmless pedantry,' he may be heard to say, 'an antiquary is in danger of getting down amongst the dead men altogether. The habitual contemplation of the *débris* of the past identifies him otherwise too much with the dust-bin. The soul fed on ashes becomes itself a cinder, old and cold.'

He is of opinion, moreover, that the right study of the past ought to have its chief effect in composing the mind to a right study of the present. 'The past is the grandfather of the future,' he will say; 'I don't find that the people of to-day are much before, or

much behind, the people of a long time ago. The Roman augurs—no doubt it is true enough—were unable to refrain from smiling—let us say boldly, winking—across their altars. Very well; when a couple of our bishops meet at the dinner-table, and sit together for an hour over the wine and walnuts, with not even an episcopal butler within ear-shot, what then, I wonder ?

There are those who pronounce the Professor, when he speaks in this manner, to be a profane jester; but for them also, as indeed for everybody, he has his answer.

‘If our quaint old friend Socrates,’ he will exclaim, ‘could be induced to give us half an hour in the flesh at some of our busy corners, what would he see, and what would he say ?’ He would probably speak somewhat after this manner: “I do not fail to remark, O men of Cockayne ! this omnibus ; this four-wheeled cab ; this pillar of a one-armed admiral ; this statue of a self-willed king ; and all about I see plainly that there are crowds of men walking to and fro : but I do not care to inquire the names of the people who are in the omnibus ; nor the number of

the cab ; nor do I care to look intently at the admiral's empty sleeve ; nor to reflect upon the king's mulish disposition and what came of it ; nor in any way whatever to strip the clothes from the people. But I observe a poor man standing yonder, humbly begging, and a rich man swaggering by without giving ; and I have seen the very same thing in Athens."'

Such a professor as this is of course a little peculiar both in person and in dress. He is a tall man, and one of the thinnest. He wears out of doors a voluminous old cloak that would hold three professors, and a hat with the widest brim that ever was seen. He walks at the rate of five miles an hour ; and knocks against other wayfarers without the slightest compunction. Indoors he wraps himself in an antiquated dressing-gown trimmed with decayed fur ; and he covers his head, or rather the back of it, with a velvet skull-cap, leaving the highest forehead in the town displayed for the respect of all. His feet, which are nearly half a yard long, are encased in shoes very low at heel, between which and the trousers good six inches of

white stocking must be exposed to view if it were measured. For full dress he puts on a blue coat adorned with large brass buttons and short in the waist, a white vest similarly short, and narrow trousers shorter still.

But dress as he may, and say what he will, our Emeritus Professor is both a gentleman and a scholar. Nor can any one fail to perceive that he is a man of power. If we descend to more mundane considerations, he is a man of good family and of independent estate; and whatever oddities he may be thought to display, these little advantages will of course serve materially to cover.

‘But it is easy to say, my dear Julian,’ continues Professor Gay, ‘that foolish people will dance while they can; suppose there should come an end to this dancing some day? How is it with Sweetbriar Gardens, my dear boy?’

‘They don’t dance very much at Sweetbriar Gardens,’ replies the young physician; ‘they drink without dancing as yet. But we must hope.’

‘I wish,’ says the Professor, ‘the devil had every man that brews beer.’

'Yes,' says Julian, reflectively, 'perhaps so.'

Madonna smiles as she regards, affectionately nevertheless, her eccentric uncle, and perhaps her eccentric lover.

'Well, my dear,' says the Professor, accepting the implied rebuke, 'no doubt the old Goths drank from the skulls of their slain enemies great draughts of bad malt liquor. But remember they were big, fierce, fighting engines, that took in fuel at long intervals and in a big, fierce way. If they fought each other in their drink—which I do not question—there was no civilisation to scandalise. But when our modern proletarian drinks, all day long and every day, in smaller measures but in much larger aggregate, his drugged and salted compound, and at night, in order to avoid his home in Sweetbriar Gardens, still drinks and drinks, all to perpetual stupefaction, not out of an appropriately mounted skull—I have one in my collection—but out of a vile pewter pot! what then?'

'Indeed it is very shocking, dear uncle,' says Madonna, as gravely as she can.

'And then the odd part of it is, Julian, that we are giving these fellows votes!' exclaims

the Professor. ‘Actually political votes!—Mere draught-horses!—Fancy Dobbin, by cruel poverty denied his beer, discovering one day that his kind has the majority of votes!’ An antiquary, amongst his other virtues, the Professor will sometimes say, must necessarily be conservative in politics; and Mr. Gay is very decidedly conservative.



CHAPTER XXII.

SIR CONSTANTINE.

ENTER Sir Constantine Gay.

Sir Constantine Gay, Baronet, is the cousin of Madonna, the nephew of the Professor, and the college chum and still intimate friend of Julian Saint-Paul. He is a young man as yet unmarried, of pleasing manners and good parts, and, we may add, of high character. There has lately devolved upon him, together with the baronetcy, a modest patrimonial estate, with parasites and parasitic influences, of course, of one kind and another, to gobble up as much of the produce as he may be induced to permit—and indeed a great deal more: the family lawyer, for instance, and the country doctor; two or three local clergymen with all their parochial claims; a swarm of local tradespeople; a train of servants at

the Hall ; here and there a score of pensioners, and a host of the promiscuous poor in his cottages ; to say nothing of horses, carriages, a park, a home farm, cover, cattle, sheep, game, glass, and what not ; and a seat in Parliament if he chooses to take it ; all doing their utmost to eat their own heads off and his, and never saying thankye. One thing he absolutely refuses to have anything to say to is the seat in Parliament.

‘Our legislators ought to be our wisest men,’ he says, ‘if we have any ; and I am not wise at all. I will try to be a man of the world, and that I may accomplish.’

And such a man as Julian Saint-Paul, who is not a man of the world, finds him a very sound adviser and a very fast friend.

‘Upon my word, Julian,’ Sir Constantine will say, ‘you’re better off with your few thousands in consols than I am with half as much a year.’

‘And I don’t know that I would change places with you, my dear Constantine,’ will be his friend’s reply ; ‘for I am afraid I should rebel against the recognised fitness of things.’

‘It is not that I am ever in want of

money,' the Baronet will go on to say, 'and I can manage easily enough, I think, never to be so ; but this handsome income, which is facetiously called mine, belongs in reality to everybody else you can think of ; and all I have to do with it is to collect and pay it away, taking for myself an honest living, if I can, in passing. And, what is more odd than all, the very labour of the treasurership, the actual brain-work and pen-and-ink-work of keeping the whole ridiculous concern before the wind, is more than I can sometimes accomplish physically.'

' You must marry, Constantine, and share the labour.'

' I can't afford it, my boy. A fashionable wife, like a stable of horses, would ruin me in ten years to a certainty—perhaps in five. There's a noble lord of my acquaintance : a very good fellow—you don't know him—who is a case in point. He fancied to amuse himself with a stud. " I have no other expenses," he said ; " I don't care for building, nor for travelling, nor for marrying ; I have no ambition ; I don't even smoke ; I'll have a good horse or two !" What was the consequence ?

He found he hadn't the money ; it was all forestalled to Tom, Dick, and Harry, and they wouldn't surrender a single penny of it ! His horse or two made the whole thing boil over ; his lawyer showed him how to mortgage ; the Jews showed him how to forestall ; and where is he now ?—Then there's another good fellow, whom you know very well. He married ; handsome woman, well brought up, and all the rest of it, and rich as well—quite a catch for him. She wouldn't rest till she had a new house ; called in a Royal Academician ; indulged in thirteenth-century architecture, or twelfth or tenth for what I know ; heraldry that nobody but the architect cared a brass button about ; painted glass, odd furniture, old china, Japan curiosities ; carpets from Thibet or some such place by way of Bond Street ; kitchen chimneys all over the place ; everything more anomalous than everything else ; expenses enormous ; repairs perpetual ; immensely admired by all sorts of absurd people ; obliged to keep the place full of company to keep it aired ; tradesmen's bills in arrears for years. Then the lady must have as good a house in town ; pulled

it to pieces under all sorts of eccentric artists ; expense enormous again ; must be filled with company, too, or what's the use of it ? Poor Jack is in perfect misery ; told me with tears in his eyes a week ago he thought he should cut his throat ; I lent him a hundred and fifty pounds—I know I shall never see it again. I'll tell you what it is, Julian—this country is going to the dogs. We're too rich and lazy. If we had all got something to do for our living—men and women of us alike—so as to have no time or temper for confounded nonsense, then we might recover ourselves perhaps.'

So Sir Constantine Gay is a philosophical radical.

The young Baronet is on very good terms with his excellent uncle, and the Emeritus Professor is always glad to see him.

‘Ah, Constantine, my dear boy ! how do you do ? Julian and I are engaged in a somewhat lame endeavour to improve the world we live in : what say you ?’

Sir Constantine shakes hands all round, and says he would prefer not to say much in

such dangerous society until he has heard the arguments.

‘It seems,’ says the Professor, ‘that in Sweetbriar Gardens the people still adore their old fetish—Beer; and Julian and I would let the devil have the brewer.’

‘I fear, my dear uncle,’ replies Sir Constantine, ‘the mischief lies deeper. The brewer is but the agent of the national will; the whole state of society is rotten; and when Julian is striving to change the condition of Sweetbriar Gardens, he is in reality struggling against, not the brewer, but the whole power of the State.’

‘You are right, Constantine,’ says his uncle; ‘there is not a vice in Sweetbriar Gardens but has, as the phrase goes, the whole power of the State at its back. The liberty we enjoy means liberty to go mad-drunk in Sweetbriar Gardens, no man daring—not even the police-officer on his beat—to make us afraid; but that is only one of many things.’

‘Drunkenness,’ says the Baronet, ‘is part of our glorious Constitution for the present.’

‘The homes of the poor,’ adds Julian, more

seriously, 'are made very wretched by it, and their lives very much devoid of joy. I wish we could get rid of it.'

'I would not discourage you, my dear fellow, for the world,' replies Sir Constantine; 'but I fear the practice is a consequence rather than a cause.'

'Uncle says,' interposes Madonna, getting a little tired of this unintelligible conversation, 'that if they would drink their beer out of the skulls of their enemies——'

'Just so, child,' says the Emeritus Professor, 'I do say so; the thing would be appropriate.'

'Then none but good soldiers would be allowed to drink,' says Sir Constantine; 'but how is the Sergeant, Julian?'

'The same astonishing old fellow that he ever was,' replies the young physician; 'my unwearied master and still more unwearied servant. Wherever misery is, there is the Sergeant to be found; wherever there is poverty, or sickness, or distress, as cheery as ever. For myself, I am but a poor atrabilarian; when the sky is clouded, I am sad; when the sun shines, I am not happy; but

this marvellous old man, when heaven is pleased to shine upon him, gives God thanks with a shout of laughter ; and when the fogs gather about him, defies them, and is only the more bright and jubilant.'

'But I fear very much,' says the Baronet, 'that even the Sergeant will fail to drive the devil, as he says, away from Sweetbriar Gardens.'

'We can only try,' says the young physician, musing, 'we can only try.'

'If Constantine be right,' says the Professor, 'it is the steam-engine, and not the devil, Julian, that has got possession of Sweetbriar Gardens. Wherever there is great wealth, no doubt, there is great poverty ; but there is something more than bodily want in our back slums ; there is a moral prostration that comes of the atrocious selfishness of highly-organised trade. Men and women become implements of manufacture ; their lives are bought and sold by weight ; every bale of goods is but so much of their misery brought into marketable form. I fear Constantine is nearly right ; and if so, you can't drive the devil out of Sweetbriar Gardens anyhow—

he has all the power of the State at his back.'

Julian sighs. 'The whole matter,' he says, 'seems so much of a mystery, one knows not where to begin.'

Madonna regards him with a singular expression of countenance. Love is alarmed ; indeed it has often been alarmed before. But oh how steadfast !

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SERGEANT.

SERGEANT JOLLYBUFF is a personage of some note at this time in that part of the Great City which lies across the river. He has but one eye ; he has but one arm ; he has but one leg ; and these circumstances of themselves might make any one else sufficiently well known. But he has besides the very jovialest countenance and the very heartiest voice in all the world ; and this makes him still better known, even when his deficiency of members may sometimes be lost sight of in the crowd. Nor is this all ; for he renders himself more noticeable than ever by the odd occupation which it is his pleasure to pursue, and which cannot be fully explained all in a moment—in fact we must go back to his early days to explain it however slightly.

The Sergeant holds the doctrine primarily that he has been all his life favoured more or less prejudicially with the particular attention of the Powers of Darkness.

‘When I was a little boy,’ says the Sergeant (this indeed is how he tells the story one day to Viscount Malign), ‘not having no father to speak of, my mother she left me out one night—in these here very Gardins—and didn’t think of me in the morning; and so the workus went and took me in. I was naked and it clothed me, don’t you see; I was sick and nows and thens in prison and it visited me; leastways that was all the clothing and all the visiting *I* got; and the first thing of any account that I remember was the lickings I had for being the blackest little sheep amongst all the black uns they’d got, and they were in generally all black enough—all of a blackness except me. So I warn’t there long afore I run away. And then I took to hanging about the market and sleeping in the arches—if you know what that is; and I got to like the life very well. Then I settled here in the Gardins, and lodged along of a particular unvirtuous old

lady at number four. I didn't get run in by the police as often as the rest, because I were slier—if you know what that is; but after all, I was, on the whole, *in* somewhere's putty much as often as *out*, and I was told many and many's the time—and didn't mind it—that I was the devil's own boy and no mistake. And so that's how I begun life, ye see, till I was getting to be a biggish chap.'

'Just so,' says his auditor, 'not an uncommon beginning.'

'So one day, as I was slinking along an alley down there on the other side of this here very street as we're a-talking in, on my way to earn a few happence by puttin' of my hand in anybody's pocket that might come handy—if you know what that is—a gentleman he come up to me. He was quite the gentleman, but I couldn't help thinking afterwards that his feet wasn't exactly like other people's. And he'd got a great-coat sort of thing on that was very long behind, as if it might be to hide something—if you understand me.'

'Oh yes, quite.'

'I didn't see anything particular on his

head, but there might ha' been ; I can't tell ; I think it's very likely they were hid under his hat—if you know what I mean.'

'Oh yes.'

'Well ; he was cross-eyed, and had a longish kind of nose ; but he was quite the gentleman to me.—Says he, "I say, my boy," says he, "I want you."—"No, you don't," I says.—"Yes, I do," he says ; "you're the very chap"—and he looked at me so hard as to take my breath away—"you're the very lad," says he, "for my money."'

'Just so.'

'Well, the long and the short of it was that this gentleman he took me to a place where I'd never been afore—and I'd been in a goodish many places by that time—and there I was introduced into the honourable company of about as nice a lot as you would ever wish to see. They were called *The Devil's Own*—if you know what that means.'

'Oh yes, a name the lawyers give themselves in sport—playing with fire.'

'That must be some other crib ; they weren't lawyers ; oh no ! But anyhow I kept amongst them for some time and did pretty well ; and,

boys and gals together, we led what you may call about as jolly a life as you could wish for—of its kind, you know—if it had only lasted; but it didn't.'

'I suppose not. And did you see the gentleman occasionally?'

'Oh yes, and was always glad to see him.'

'Ah!'

'Yes; when he come it meant brandy instead of beer. We had plenty of beer at all times—that is if we did our work—if you know what that means; but when the—the gentleman come it meant plenty of brandy.'

'I see.'

'Well; at last I was wanted very particular—if you understand me. I don't tell tales more than I can help, and I don't know why I should tell all this to you more than anybody else, I'm sure.'

'Never mind.'

'Well; it was about something with violence—if you know what that means; and the man had what's called a squeak for it—if you understand me.'

'Perfectly.'

'Well; and so the—the gentleman he

advised me to enlist into the army, don't you see? And so I did.'

'And how did you get on there?'

'Just about as badly as I could well tell you—at least as long as I happened to keep within reach of the—the gentleman, you know.'

'I see.'

'And what was odd, wherever I went, all over the country, there he turned up sooner or later. And when he did turn up, it was the old story—brandy instead of beer. I was very fond of beer at any time, and my back's all scored over for it in a way that would astonish you—if you understand me.'

'Quite.'

'I was near shot once.'

'Indeed?'

'As a uncorrigible deserter, that was.'

'I see.'

'And then they very near drummed me out.'

'Yes.'

'Give me a drop of brandy at that time, and I could no more speak a word of truth than if I was a poll parrot. Nor yet keep

my hands off of anything. I shot at the adjutant once !

‘ Did you ? ’

‘ I did. Of course you won’t mention it.’

‘ Oh no.’

‘ They brought it in a accident. That’s how I lost my eye—leastways it come to that in the end.’

‘ I see. And your leg ? ’

‘ That was a fight with the corporal. He was a North Country man, and I thought he had twisted it right off. But the doctor brought it round again ; and a many years after, if you’ll believe me, I lost that same leg along of that same affair.’

‘ Ah ! ’

‘ So they told me—nothing else in the world ; laid hold of the bone somehow.’

‘ And your arm ? ’

‘ I lost my arm in battle ; that was a different thing. But I haven’t come to that. You don’t know that I’ve got a bullet in my hip ? ’

‘ No.’

‘ That was in battle too. It was the same adjutant I was a-speaking of. We was in

retreat from a storm. The officer—he was major then—he fell. It was precious hot work. Jack Horne, he was skirmishing beside me; so I says, “Jack,” I says, “that’s the major.”—“I don’t care if it is,” says Jack; “he ain’t no friend o’ mine.” (Jack’s been dead many’s the year, or I wouldn’t mention it.)—“Nor he ain’t o’ mine,” I says; “but you and me can’t see him lie there, can we?”—“No,” says Jack, “I don’t think we can.”—So Jack and me, we brought the major in; and that’s how I got the ball in my hip, and was hit on my elbow too. It was precious hot work, that was. And I had my cap shot off; and Jack was hit too more than once. But we brought the major in. And the whole ridgment, though they mightn’t have liked the major, gave us three cheers, they did !

‘Ah, it was bravely done.’

‘And them cheers,’ says the Sergeant, with a hearty laugh, ‘they broke my heart. They sounded so cordial like, that I just cried like a babby. “Jollybuff,” says I, “you vagabond! you ain’t worth it, unless you turn over a new leaf. Resist the devil,” says I, “you

uncorrigible buffer ! and he will flee away even yet." And so I resisted him from that day forward, and he flowed away. But I was made a sergeant on the field.'

' I see.'

The theory of the worthy Sergeant is therefore this :—Satan had early marked him for his own ; the loss of his eye—by a flash in the pan—was brought about by the direct agency of Satan's temptation ; the loss of his leg, as the consequence of a flagrant act of indiscipline, was practically the same ; the loss of his arm, although suffered in open action, need not be made an exception, as the doctors who cut it off declared they couldn't see how it should have come to that ; and the bullet in his hip, seeing especially that it gives him yet at times a good deal of annoying pain, may be put down with the rest so as to make one account of the whole. But this last mentioned outrage, the Sergeant thinks, may be said to have miscarried altogether ; inasmuch as the three cheers of the regiment were the means of breaking for ever the power of his enemy, and in fact of enabling the persecuted soldier to turn again

and assume the offensive with a dauntless breast. At the same time, and as if especially to prove the sheer spitefulness of this final misadventure, the Sergeant has to acknowledge that in fact it may be said to have brought about all the rest. He went into hospital with his members whole, and only to get rid, as he expected, of the bullet in his hip ; he left it shorn as we see him. The drink, he says in a whisper, came out upon him at last, and made a clean sweep of him, did the drink. It caught his eye, which had been a bit weakish for many years ; it caught his leg, which had been a little queer at times ; it laid hold of his arm, which the elbow had only been grazed ; and it set the bullet so hard in his hip that out it wouldn't come by no means. But at any rate, as he went into hospital a sergeant, he came out a sergeant, and a pensioner ; and certain it is that he has never taken to the drink again.

But it would be an error to suppose that the Sergeant has achieved all these logical conclusions, uneducated as he is in scholastic theology, without assistance. He met in hospital a veteran warrior by name Methody

Tom ; and it was this personage who explained to him the rights and wrongs of the matter. It was the devil, said Methody Tom, who was at the bottom of most things, going about like a roaring lion ; and it was his opinion that he had been at the bottom of Jollybuff ever sin' he was born, from what he could make out ; and that in fact he it was and no other who first picked up Jollybuff in the Gardins ; which, if he had noticed him at the time, would have been found to have his feet not exactly like other people's, something hid behind under his coat skirts, and something else on his head covered by his hat ; a shrewd suggestion which at once carried conviction home to Jollybuff's mind ! Subsequent investigation between the soldiers only confirmed Methody Tom's opinion ; and a variety of instances which this counsellor was able to cite from tradition as well as personal experience satisfied the Sergeant that that opinion was about as right as ninepence. Although of the most jovial and unsuspicuous disposition in the world, Sergeant Jollybuff conceived a violent prejudice against the devil ; and resolved, as he said, if the Lord

would but once let him out of hospital, to devote all that might be left of him—which by that time did not promise to be much—to the duty of thwarting that satanic policy which his comrade had described in such astonishing detail. What made matters worse was that Methody Tom died in hospital of gangrene, in the most unexpected and indeed unnecessary way, expressing with his last breath his defiance of the enemy, and laying his commands upon Sergeant Jollybuff to serve him out or he was no man !

So the way in which Sergeant Jollybuff carries on this enterprise is the occupation which it is his pleasure to pursue in the slums across the water ; and which he has now pursued for a good many years with remarkable success of its kind.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AMATEUR WARFARE.

THE Sergeant's pension is something under two shillings a day. Upon this allowance he is able to live, as he says, like a fighting-cock—the good man's ideas generally running upon fighting still—as may be deemed not unreasonable. He has a barrack-room on the top storey of a house in Sweetbriar Gardens. Its furniture comprises a camp-bed, a table, two chairs, and three clothes-pins on a rail; besides a cupboard in the corner which is appropriated to the coals below, the linen above, and the provisions and cooking apparatus between. The master of this establishment waits upon himself; he scrubs the floor for himself, cooks for himself, unscrews his wooden leg for himself when he gets into bed, screws it on again when he gets up, and

even washes for himself, except his shirts—of which he has two, one off and one on—and what more could mortal man want ?

Occupation, only occupation. So the Sergeant adopts as an occupation, and not by way of amusement as some suppose, the systematic thwarting of the enemy through whose operations he has been deprived of the use of so many portions of his person, to say nothing of his character.

Now the Devil has no doubt long had a thorough grip of the back slums across the river. Thus it was that the good Sergeant, when he resolved upon fighting him on the principles of Methody Tom, resolved that Sweetbriar Gardens should be the fighting-ground. For indeed, as we know, he had no farther to go to find the very spot where he had been born and in a manner brought up.

‘ I’m a Sweetbriar Gardiner born,’ said the Sergeant ; ‘ and a Sweetbriar Gardiner let me die ; I don’t think I can find a much more nastier place anywhere else, and what the Lord will let me do I’ll go and do there.’

So he procured a military overcoat with the stripes of his rank on the sleeve, a military

knapsack, and a military undress cap. In the knapsack he cut a convenient aperture, whereinto money might be dropped to aid him in his warfare—it being of no use to fight without the sinews of war. There is a legend written boldly on the knapsack thus: 'Jollybuff! For the Poor! He that giveth to the Poor lendeth to the Lord!!' And the Sergeant's occupation, in a word, is to receive money in this way and to distribute it judiciously as he receives it; taking no thought for to-morrow.

And this is all he does; and he finds it as much as he can do; for in this he labours from morning till night every day in the week, and in foul weather as in fair.

As an illustration of the Sergeant's work in its practical aspect, there may be mentioned a certain habit that he has of standing at the corner of the streets—probably in front of the premises of respected licensed victuallers—and proclaiming wisdom to the passers-by in his jovial manner.

‘“ Ho, every one that thirsteth !”’ says the Sergeant. ‘What are ye laughing at, you with the fur cap ?’

‘Can’t help laughing, master ; won’t you have a drop o’ beer yourself?’

‘Beer, you horse marine ! I can’t afford none of your beer. No more can you. It empties the pocket and don’t any the more fill the belly. Look at me ! Talk about beer ?’

‘Well, don’t be too hard upon us, master ; I’m a old soldier like yourself.’

‘Give us your hand, comrade ; if ye’ve seen service as I have, ye’ve seen the day when, to say nothing of beer, the very water that ye had was of such a consistency that the dirt at the top served conveniently to hide the worms at the bottom.’

‘That I have, comrade.’

‘And yet ye talk about beer !’

‘Well, I do ; I must say I like a little of it.’

‘How much in the course of last week, comrade ? Put it in money and tell us.’

‘Well no, I shouldn’t azactly like to do that.’

‘Well, comrade, I’ll not push any man up into a corner ; but will ye make a bargain for next week ?’

And perhaps the man will ; and perhaps

two or three men will ; and then the Sergeant shakes hands all round with a roar of laughter, and goes off saying to himself, that he wonders how ' he ' will like that.

On one occasion the Sergeant was summoned to appear before the magistrate for obstructing the footway in front of a fine gin-palace, which had just been benevolently established, regardless of expense, for supplying the public with genuine porter, fine ales, and celebrated wholesome Old Tom, at the lowest prices, notwithstanding their unrivalled quality. The landlord was a very ' upphis ' sort of gentleman, and a new-comer to the neighbourhood. The police advised him not to take out the summons, but he said he knew his own business best. The magistrate was observed to smile as he granted it.

The defendant appeared, perfectly radiant with good-humour.

' How are you, Sergeant ? ' said the magistrate.

' Very well, your worship ; and hoping I see you well yourself, and hearty.'

' Thank you, Sergeant ; now what's the case ? '

The defendant had come to a stop in front of the new public-house, and had openly reviled its wares. The complainant was particularly 'upnish' in the witness-box, and went so far as to say 'he was the representative of a respectable trade—second to none in the hempire—which they were entitled to the protection of the law against cadgers of this sort ;' whereupon six or eight other landlords of public-houses, who had come to see the fun, not happening to make such liberal professions as the new-comer about the superior quality of their goods, laughed aloud and had to be silenced by the crier.

'May I ask what you mean by cadgers ?' said the magistrate, who was an unusually bland magistrate.

'Well, your worship, this here sort of hypercritical humbugs——'

'Stop, stop, stop ; I believe you're a new arrival here, sir, are you not ?'

'Yes, sir, I am ; and I can't say that I admire your neighbourud.'

'You're quite at liberty to leave it, you know.'

'Well, I don't see why you should make

that observation to me. I'm a man of money and of high carater.'

A death-like silence took possession of the court when this unparalleled reply was made. Policemen opened their eyes wide. The public at the back of the court scarcely drew their breath. The reporter fell back in his seat. The clerk fixed his eyes upon the complainant and could not remove them. The gaoler got his keys ready. Even the learned justice himself began to look grave for a moment, as he calmly regarded the defiant victualler.

'Just so,' said the magistrate, looking him straight in the face. 'Then you deserve the congratulations of every one in this court. To be a man of money is to be a man of power. Use your power well, and Heaven will reward you. To be a man of high character is, even in these days, to be a right worshipful man, head and shoulders taller than the people. Maintain your supremacy with all possible care, and the world will look up to you. But, sir, I am bound to say that a man of money and of high character may, in my opinion, do better with both than keep a public-house.'

The outraged victualler clapped his hat on his head, very much on one side, and bounced out of the court. Perhaps it was the best thing he could do.

‘I scorn,’ said he, ‘to demean myself by replyin’ to sich insiniiations. A trade as can command a majority in the ‘Ouse——’

But the close of his remarks was lost, as the astonished constabulary persuaded him away into the outer lobby of the court.

‘How do you get on, Sergeant?’ said his worship; ‘you haven’t applied to the poor-box lately.’

‘No, your worship; the public has been a little bit more liberal than ordinary; and the disbursement of their funds is a-growing more difficult; because there’s less honesty, I’m beginning to think, than there used to be.’

Here the defendant rattled his knapsack, and in his hilarious manner asked the magistrate whether he could help his worship a bit in his turn.

The magistrate smilingly replied that money was always welcome.

‘Then I’ll ask your leave, sir, to fine myself twenty shillings or a month,’ said the

Sergeant, extracting the amount from his store and handing it over for the poor-box, 'seeing that p'raps after all I was a little satirical upon the man's liquors, remembering of old times when the devil had me. But really the place was painted up and gilded so grand, and the silver taps to the various abominations that he sells was shining so bright, and the damsels at the bar was all decked out so very pretty, and it looked altogether, outside and in, so like the devil's own trap for souls, that I thought I ought not to miss sich a favourable opportunity for a-carrying of the war into the enemy's country and engaging of him at close quarters, your worship. And so no doubt I may have said many a thing that would offend the gentleman's stomach. But I hope your worship will not objeet to my sending of the knapsack round.'

The worthy magistrate objected not; the knapsack was handed round; and it is enough to say it left the court heavier than it had entered it.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MARKET.

IT is the habit of his Excellency the Viscount Malign to go forth alone into the highways and even the byways of the Great City to contemplate human character and destiny. One afternoon he finds himself across the river and in the heart of a throng of people. It is Saturday, and the crowd is that of an outdoor market.

A cold thick sweat fills the atmosphere, through which the gas lamps and the lighted shop windows shine with a lurid unwholesome glow, pervading the murky vapour like one more villainous element cast into the air to complete the aspect of a pandemonium. Stalls for the sale of a hundred poor wares, from stale fish—very stale sometimes—to engravings and ballads, and even toys for

children, line both sides of the way beyond the curb of the footpaths. From these, and frequently from the shops behind, there proceeds an unintermittent storm of discordant yells, by way of invitations to buy, which literally cause one's ears to tingle ; so that the equally persistent hubbub of chaffering and friendly conversation carried on in shouts, and of laughter pulsating in roars—which elsewhere would have been alone an unendurable disorder—here becomes almost welcome as a subdued undertone, composing into a weird chorus the greater tempest of sound, as if only the ocean and the gale were gambolling together in the dirty night upon some melancholy shore.

His Excellency makes his way through the seething mob slowly and with composure. He wears a low-crowned hat, and a thick pilot-coat under which his boots reach above the knees ; and, if comfort be any consideration with him, he looks comfortably clad no doubt, as his eyes travel over the unsavoury company around him in attentive reflection.

‘ You ain’t used, sir,’ says a man who has happened to be moving by his side for some

minutes, 'to sich a kind of crowd as this here, sir, very much, I dare say, sir.'

'Oh yes.'

'It ain't a nice place, sir ; is it, sir ?'

'I have seen worse.'

'Poor folks must take what they can get, sir, in this world, mustn't they, sir ?'

'Perhaps they must.'

'You wouldn't take me for a parson, sir, would you ?'

'I think not.'

'No more I ain't, sir ; nor yet a doctor, sir ; nor a peliceman, sir, I ain't ; nor a beak ; nor yet a member o' parlyment, sir. I can assure you, sir, I ain't ne'er a one o' them things.'

'No, I should say not.'

'I'm a poor man, sir, a poor honest working lad, sir ; out o' work, sir, for seven weeks ; four children, sir, and a dead mother, sir ; you wouldn't think all that to see me, sir, would you now ?'

'Perhaps not.'

'Always keeps myself respectable, sir ; always did ; my father was a gentleman, sir ; you wouldn't think it, sir, would you ?'

The man is a commonplace rough young fellow, neither dirty nor ragged, nor unhealthy under the standard of the locality ; but his lower jaw hangs out menacingly, and his eyes look cunning and cruel. ‘No, sir, you wouldn’t think I was a gentleman’s son, sir, would you, a respectable tradesman’s ?’

‘Perhaps not.’

‘No, sir, appearances in this world is werry deceivin’, ain’t they, sir ?’

‘Very.’

‘You ain’t got a shillin’ about you, sir, have you ? Or sich a thing as ’arf-a-crown ?’

‘Oh yes.’

‘It would be werry welcome, sir, to a poor fellow, sir ; out o’ work, sir, for five weeks along of a lock-out, sir ; wife and children at ’ome, sir, and nothing but cold potatoes, sir, all the time, sir ; I’ll take my oath on it, sir.’

‘Hullo, Larky !’ shouts to him a fellow from over the way, a tall powerful young man, otherwise the very counterpart of himself, ‘how goes it, my gooseberry-tart ?’

‘All right, ’Arry, all right !—A werry dis-respectable cove, sir ; but obliged to be civil to sich in this world, ain’t we, sir ?’

‘Yes.’

‘There ain’t a-many what you would call real virtuous ones about now, is there, sir?’

‘Not many.’

‘It’s a queer world, ain’t it, sir?’

‘It is.’

‘Poor folks has got the dirty end of the stick, ain’t they, sir?’

‘Sometimes.’

‘Don’t you think always, sir?’

‘Not always.’

‘You wasn’t in the Drive last Sunday arternoon, was you, sir?’

‘I was.’

‘Lord! how curious; so was I, sir. I think I seed you.’

‘Well?’

‘I was lookin’ at the fine ladies in the cartridges, sir; werry pretty sight, sir, warn’t it?’

‘Very.’

‘Look at them dowidgers, sir, all in silks and sattings, and velvets, and pretty fur jackets, and parasols, sir; although it warn’t neither sunshining nor yet rainy weather, sir, were it? How ‘andsome they looked, and comfitable, and soft, like tabbies.’

‘No doubt.’

‘Yes, sir ; and nothing never wenturing to come nigh them at ’ome, I dare say, but parsons, and City missionaries, and other sich smooth parties. They ain’t got no rough ’usbands to jaw them, sir, have they ?’

‘Oh, never.’

‘Nor yet no idle sons ; nor no daughters as don’t turn out well ; have they, sir ?’

‘Of course not.’

‘And they never goes exaspiating of each other with cheek, do they, sir ?’

‘Probably never.’

‘And never in want of money, of course, sir ?’

‘Of course not.’

‘And then just you look at our old gals, sir, in a neighbourud like this. There’s their ’usbands everlasting jawing of them ; and p’r’aps giving of ’em a crack on the head now and then when they jaws back again.’

‘Yes.’

‘And short of money on Saturday nights. Lord ! what a many of them women there, with their little basket on one arm and their



babby on the other, don't know what to do to save a copper.'

'No doubt.'

'And when the little boy grows up, what is there afore him, sir ?'

'Not very much good, I fear.'

'And when the little gal grows up, sir ?'

'Yes.'

'Hullo, Larky !' shouts another acquaintance from the middle of the roadway, 'shall we see you down yonder presently ?'

'All right, Jimmy, all right !—Another merry disrespectful party, sir, I'm sorry to say ; but I always keeps on civil terms with everybody, sir, in this here world.'

'Quite right.'

'You ain't got that 'arf-crown, sir, 'andy, as you was a-goin' to give me ? It would be merry welcome to a poor unfortunate cove, sir, which is a leetle down on his luck.'

'Take two of them, friend ; one for your pleasant conversation, and one for your trouble in now telling me a little more about yourself.' And the Ambassador bestows upon Larky that peculiar glance which acts so strangely upon such a one as dear Lord

Freddy, for instance, at the Lady Aurora's assembly, and even (with reverence be it said) upon Monsignore Saint-Paul.

'God bless you, sir!'

'You blaspheme; go on with your tale, and let these good people hear as little of it as you wish.'

The man shudders from head to foot as Viscount Malign now leads him out of the crowd, a couple of steps down a dark and dismal lane that goes off towards the river-side.

'God forgive me, then, sir,' says he; 'for this is the werry place I was to ha' marked you down in; and 'Arry and Jim is close behind. You don't care about bein' garotted, sir, I suppose?'

'Not in the least.'

'Arry and Jim and me has took to the business regular, sir, the last three or four months; and it pays werry middlin'. I'm the jackal, you know, sir; and 'Arry he does the squeeze; and Jimmy makes the cleanest sweep o' the pockets I ever see in all my life; Lord! he don't leave neither a toothpick nor yet a handkercher, and it's all done in a second.'

‘Clever fellows!’

‘But I don’t know what makes me go for to tell you all this, you know, sir.’

‘Never mind, you are now free;’ and his Excellency turns his back upon the man, and proceeds to walk down the dark lane towards the river.

In an instant the two confederates, who have been peeping round the corner of the gateway during the last part of the conversation, come running stealthily along the narrow passage; and Larky, the spell removed, instinctively whispers an ‘All right,’ although his knees are knocking together with fear.

The next moment Viscount Malign faces round, and, before his intended assailants can stop their progress, he has struck them right and left, as if he were felling oxen with his hands. They drop like the brutes they resemble, and he steps calmly over their carcasses, passes their shivering ally like a man of stone, and takes his place in the crowd again.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MOTHERHOOD.

‘You seem out of spirits, my good woman,’ says the Viscount Malign to a cleanly-dressed motherly person, as of the working class, with a worn and furrowed face, carrying her basket on her arm—as yet nothing in it.

‘I may well be out of spirits,’ replies the woman, in an unexpected accent of ladylike speech.

‘What may be the matter, madam?’

‘Not much that a gentleman like you can understand; the lot of the poor is very forlorn, and their women may well be sad.’

‘You speak solemnly, madam; you have suffered.’

‘I have. Heaven has been very hard with me.’

‘You have sinned, perhaps?’

‘We have all sinned.’

‘May I offer you money, madam?’ says the Ambassador gently.

‘No; I thank you very sincerely, but it is useless now; I can bear my poverty, but I carry something on my mind to-night that I cannot bear.’

The Ambassador glances at the woman as we have seen him glance at others.

‘What makes me confide in you, sir, I cannot tell.’ They have by this time arrived at the end of the market-street, and emerged from the throng into a quieter thoroughfare beyond. ‘I am the daughter, sir, of a country clergyman in the West. We were not rich; I think nothing of that; we were honest. I was wayward, perhaps——’

‘Perhaps?’

‘I was wayward. My mother died. Against my father’s wish I married a neighbour’s son. My father said he was idle and worthless; but what will not love disguise?’

‘Truly.’

‘My husband was handsome, and I was fair.’

‘No doubt, madam.’ The Viscount lifts his hat.

'I am past flattery now, sir, but I thank you.'

'And so your husband—'

'And so my husband became all my father had predicted. I ceased to love him.'

'And he—'

'To love me. We came down in the world, and down, and down. At length we agreed to part. So he married again.'

'And you ?'

'I did the same.'

'What do they call that ?'

'Oh yes, oh yes ; that was but a trifle.'

'Well ?'

'I fear he found himself no better. I found myself rather worse. Again I was single. But I had no home, no means. I shifted as I could.'

'Yes ?'

'I married no more ; but I took the first home that offered.'

'Yes ?'

'It was worse than the former. I took another, therefore ; and another. Worse and worse. I was faithful and careful, and, so far as kindness could be possible, I have

been always kind. But, sir, I could not live with brutes ! For many years now I have lived alone ; in deep poverty, of course, but honestly. I had a son, only one. I did what I could for him ; God forgive him and me—I did my best.'

‘Yes ?

‘And—they hanged him yesterday !

Even the eyes of Viscount Malign wince at the contemplation of this weird vortex of descending shame.

‘What would you advise me to do, kind sir ?

‘What should I advise you to do ?

‘The river runs at the end of this wharf ; and it is quite dark to-night.’

‘Yes, it is.’

‘Or I can purchase a little charcoal.’

‘Oh yes.’

‘Blood I am not strong enough to look upon.’

‘No.’

‘I could do murder, and suffer for it, like my boy ; but I have no one to kill ; no one has done me wrong. And I have wronged no one.’

‘And yet the world has gone so hard with you?’

‘Do you know anything of poisons?’

‘You have no friends?’

‘None.’

‘Go home and sleep. Your boy is not the first by many a thousand; and they all had mothers. If they were to hang every man that deserves it, what a festival it would make! Here is money. Go home and sleep.’

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE VISCOUNT AND THE SERGEANT.

SERGEANT JOLLYBUFF happens to be walking along the street in which the poor woman has been thus revealing the story of her sad life to the Viscount Malign; he comes up just as she is turning to go home. ‘Hullo, mistress!’ exclaims the Sergeant in his hearty way, ‘and how are ye?’

The Ambassador Extraordinary has seen a good many queer people in the course of his career, and his curiosity is not always so easily attracted except when he is especially bent on observation. But as the Sergeant brings himself to a halt, shorn of the natural members of his body all down one side, as if he were but a slice of a man within his great-coat, and yet so radiant with the sunshine of

existence, the Viscount cannot help making him a polite bow.

‘Good-evening to ye, sir,’ says the Sergeant, touching his cap in return with his forefinger.

‘A good soul, sir,’ says the woman, ‘as ever lived; the friend of the poor and helpless. A kind gentleman, Sergeant, who sympathises with me in my misfortune.’

‘The devil has played you a dirty trick, mistress!’ says the Sergeant somewhat indignantly.

The Viscount seems startled.

‘Resist him and he will flee from ye.’

‘Ah! it is too late.’

‘Never a bit of it!’

‘What resistance can bring back my boy?’

‘That’s true. But, ye see, the lad might have died just as well by the cholery morbus, or the smallpock, or the delirium tremendous, or some other sich enormity; whereas, as I count it up, he left the world like a gentleman. The deceased man angered him, and he fout him like a man; and because they must needs make an example of the next curb-stone that should give a falling man a

misfortunate crack on the head, they took your lad and made him the example.' It must be recorded that this account of the transaction is scarcely correct; malice afore thought having been proved against the young ruffian so clearly as to leave no loophole for mercy; but the good Sergeant's remarks soothe the poor mother's feelings, and that is enough for the moment. 'Satan, I say,' continues the old soldier, winking at the Viscount Malign, 'has played us a dirty trick, mistress; but it's one consolation that we can defy him after all!' And the Sergeant, in order to give emphasis to his rhetoric, actually snaps his fingers in the face of the Ambassador Extraordinary, although of course with no unfriendly or even disrespectful intention.

The Ambassador, unaccustomed to such behaviour, can scarcely have lost his temper for a moment; but, as he draws himself up, he darts a glance at the Sergeant as if he had shot forth a viper's tongue.

'Sir,' says Sergeant Jollybuff, 'ye want to know who this remarkable old party is, and all about him in plain language; don't ye, now?'

‘I do,’ replies the Viscount with an air of authority.

He tells him his story, as we have already recorded it; and broadly charges the Enemy of Souls with the mutilation of his body and the destruction of his character.

‘It is nonsense,’ says Viscount Malign plainly.

‘Nonsense it may be,’ replies the Sergeant with a shout of joyous merriment; ‘but perhaps, sir,’ he adds, ‘ye may not believe in such a thing as Satan.’

The Ambassador bows in silence.

‘I believe in him, I can assure you,’ says the Sergeant.

The Ambassador bows again. ‘But it is not such as you——’ says he, with a touch of contempt.

‘Not such as me?’ echoes the Sergeant; ‘and who, then, may I ask, does his Majesty take notice on?’

‘Gay gentlemen and fine ladies, Master Soldier; people of intellect and wealth and leadership; with plenty of sharp acidulated sin within them to satisfy a fastidious tooth;

not honest old veterans—What is in your knapsack, comrade ?

‘ I am not in the habit of turning my back to any civil gentleman,’ says the Sergeant, by way of a standard joke ; ‘ but ye’ll excuse me, sir, for once ; ’ and he presents to the Viscount the legend on the knapsack.

The Viscount reads it. ‘ Yes,’ he says, ‘ it is so.’

‘ I will not ask you to contribute,’ says the old soldier.

‘ Why not ? ’

‘ Because we’ve had a bit of a brush.’

‘ Not at all ; not at all. Why should I not contribute to the poor ? I pity the poor.’

The Sergeant, with a fresh burst of jubilation, turns his back again to the stranger. It is enough to say that the knapsack has seldom before contained so much in cash as it now receives ; but whether anything will ever occur to cause the good man to suspect that this money serves his beneficent purpose any less effectually than the rest we cannot tell.

‘ Now reveal to me frankly,’ says the Viscount in a pleasant tone, ‘ what you think of yourself.’

‘Well, sir, just this, as God is my witness, and, if you’ll excuse me, the other personage as well. I’m a foolish old fellow that can’t be content to keep quiet. So, having my time on my hands, and no money to spare, but an enmity that ain’t to be wondered at against the devil and all his works, and a kind of pity in me for poverty, I have constituted myself a sturdy beggar for the sake of the needy ; seeking no reward, I’ll swear ! but glad to think that a worn-out old warrior, with only half of him left, can still be trusted to carry the flag of charity through the streets of a place like this !’

‘And you think the devil makes all this misery ?’

‘Indeed I do.’

‘But is it not men and women that do it ? Consider. It is but matter of arithmetic. The supremacy of a few must be counterbalanced by the degradation of many, or where is the supremacy ? To have one grand gracious lord, you must have a thousand serfs ; or where is the lord ? To have one bloated millionaire, you must have a thousand hungry beggars. To dress one foolish selfish

old harridan in silks and laces ; to perfume her with sweets ; to put the artificial damask on her cheek, and the fictitious lustre in her eye ; to feed her with indigestible dainties, and pay courtly homage to her as she totters to the grave ; a hundred sweet young lives must be devoted to poisonous toil, or cast out in despair on the inhospitable streets ! And for every fair maiden, too, who slumbers in voluptuous idleness till the sun proclaims high day, and on whose soft and jewelled hand the wind must not be permitted to blow—for every brilliant hothouse thing like this the overthrown balance of creation must produce a crowd of stunted miserables, to drag through the shortened years of a despised existence in dirt and rags and tears. And then they blame the devil for it all !

‘ Well, sir,’ says Sergeant Jollybuff, ‘ sorry should I be to do injustice even to the devil. He is mine enemy, and I am his ; but I am willing to give him a fair field, and I will confess that there are some folks that shall be nameless that I come across nows and thens who seem to me, if the truth must be told, to be well able to do without him

And the old soldier guffaws heartily in appreciation of his own jest.

‘Oh yes,’ says the Ambassador; ‘there you speak good sense. But tell me this, comrade; you cannot evade it; every man has his price—every labourer feels that he is worthy of his hire; what is your price—your hire—for carrying that knapsack on your back in the service of the needy, as I doubt not you honestly do?’

The spell of Viscount Malign is on the Sergeant, or human nature might evade giving an answer; or might not indeed very clearly grasp the question. The Viscount regards him intently.

‘I was going to say, sir, that I’m just a conceited old fellow after all; and odd in my ways; and a little bit pugnacious by profession, ye know, and self-willed; but the Lord doesn’t look for perfection in His servants, I hope?’

‘Of course not.’

‘Of course not. Well, what I say is this. Here’s a man—or the half of a man—of the name of Jollybuff; a conceited, odd, contentious, wilful, old non-commissioned officer,

and a little bit confused, it may be, in the upper storey. Well, he's all I have to offer; will you take him, says I, for the little that he's worth? That's what I say, sir; and—I've got my answer.'

‘You are going amongst the poor to-night?’

‘I am even so.’

‘Let me go with you.’

‘Willingly, sir willingly; and proud of your company.’

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SWEETBRIAR GARDENS.

THE unhappy woman who has been the means of making these personages acquainted having long before escaped from out of the reach of their ungentle conversation, perhaps in some dismay, the Sergeant leads his companion, not through the market throng, but by less tumultuous ways, to the dismal slum which is his field of labour. It consists of a main thoroughfare about twenty feet wide, with a number of branch alleys on each side whose width varies from ten feet to four. The main street is called Sweetbriar Gardens, and the name is all that is left of the memory of fresh air and flowers.

The houses are squalid to the uttermost extreme. There is scarcely a family in the whole area which possesses for its home

more than a single room ; in many instances one room will hold two families, or three.

But even a settlement so unfavourably circumstanced as this is frequently found to be endowed, although scarcely by a bountiful Providence, with a certain compensating agency of its kind ; and it is the fortune of Sweetbriar Gardens to have two of these, one at each end. In a word, ‘The Sun in Heaven’ stands at one extremity, and ‘The Pilgrim’s Rest’ at the other ; and, inasmuch as the Gardens are not only a short thoroughfare but a straight one, it happens that the imposing façade of the Sun in Heaven, situated on the opposite side of a cross street, agreeably closes the vista in one direction, while that of the Pilgrim’s Rest, similarly situated in the other, serves the same hospitable purpose there. Indeed, when the gas-lamps of these two restaurants are fully alighted on a winter’s evening, they effectually illuminate the whole length of the Gardens, that the parish, if so disposed, might dispense with street-lamps, and thus save something considerable. Not only so, but both of these temples of refreshment are

likewise temples of song ; and the inhabitants of Sweetbriar Gardens have a satisfactory choice provided for them, by a friendly arrangement which subsists between the landlords, whereby they can have comic vocalism and Charity's Entire at one end, or sentimental minstrelsy and Mercy's Entire at the other ; the liquors of both establishments being somewhat suspiciously, if not superfluously, proclaimed in large gold lettering to be genuine.

‘ These taverns,’ says the Viscount Malign, contemplating the little crowds of happy men and women at their doors, ‘ must be a great blessing to the locality, Sergeant. To the work-worn labouring man, repelled from his dark unsavoury den in one of these unlovely houses, they offer brightness and gaiety, laughter and music, and—what do they give him to drink ? ’

‘ Salted porter and watered aquafortis,’ says the Sergeant.

‘ Just so ; ingenious stimulants which drown dull care by at once assuaging thirst and provoking it. The people of this place are mightily obliged, no doubt, to Messrs. Charity

and Mercy. I think I am acquainted with the gentlemen in high society. I think I have seen them, and listened to their benevolent opinions, in the very legislature.'

'No doubt,' says Sergeant Jollybuff.

'And if he who makes two blades of grass to grow,' continues the Viscount, 'where but one grew before, is a benefactor to his species, what shall we say of him who brings a bumper of such excellent liquor to Sweetbriar Gardens where no liquor at all could ever have found its way without him? I suppose the devil built these taverns?'

'I fancy it was the brewers, sir, I fancy it was; the devil may have been so polite as to lay the foundation-stone, but I think the brewers could do very well without him in a place like this.'

'I think so too.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

REDUCED IN CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE Sergeant prepares a lantern which he carries at his waist, and, with his companion, now ascends one of the filthy staircases as far as the top floor of the house, where they enter a garret-room. The occupants are a very old man and a very old woman, both extremely dirty. The woman is lying bedridden and speechless on the remains of a mattress; the man is crouching over the fireplace; he is cooking something upon a little smoking pile of black coal, and continually talking to himself in an undertone. The furniture of the room consists of a few broken pieces long past repairing; the ceiling and walls are foul and rotten; the floor might as well be that of some dirty workshop long disused; the window-glass is cracked and patched with

lumps of putty and pieces of board ; and the stains of the rain appear in all quarters damp and mouldy. The old people, the Sergeant whispers, have been man and wife for over sixty years.

They have lived together no more happily, perhaps, than others ; but in their old age they refuse to be separated. The woman has been dying slowly for years ; and this has brought out in the poor old husband all the love of his younger and better days intensified. When this abject bedridden silent creature dies, then he too will die, he says ; but not till then. Helpless as he is, forsaken, wretched, he is not utterly forlorn while there is breath in the voiceless and senseless body which he seems still to regard as that of a young and blooming girl. Nor is she utterly forlorn while he is by her sad bedside.

‘The guardians of the poor——’ says the Sergeant.

‘Truly a blessed title,’ exclaims Viscount Malign.

‘Well,’ continues the Sergeant, ‘perhaps so ; but they allow the old people so many loaves of bread a-week and a few other

trifles according to rule, seeing that they won't go into the poor-house and be separated, because of old times.'

The old man, cooking at the fireplace, has ears sharp enough to hear this. 'To be sure,' says he with a snarl. 'Like an old pair o' shoes—past using. Chuck one of 'em away on this side, you know. Also chuck one of 'em on that side, you know. But Nancy and me didn't exactly see the good of it. Did we, Nancy, dear?'

The old woman makes no reply; but a faint smile seems to play upon her withered lips as her dull eyes follow the movements of her husband.

'My name,' says the old man, 'is Mr. Augustus Valentine; and I am reduced in circumstances. My old lady's name is Mrs. Augustus Valentine. We were married—you know where we were married, Sergeant—the same time as a lord and a lady. They had to wait till we were served, I can tell you. I was a very fashionable hatter in the parish—hatter to his Majesty. Was on the vestry many years; and a guardian of the poor too. We were much looked up to, I can

tell you ; my old lady and me. And my old lady used to give away a good deal in the course of a year. More than I liked sometimes ; didn't you, Nancy ? And what a pretty girl she was, to be sure !

It was the old story—so perfectly commonplace that it is not worth telling : dull times ; business went wrong ; bad debts ; composition with creditors ; began again ; worse instead of better ; sold up ; took a smaller shop by the help of friends ; things did not improve ; wife broke down ; subscription ; didn't last long ; quarrelled with friends ; friends died out. (Took a little to drinking ; drinks yet when drink can be had ; requires a good deal of watching on the part of worthy Sergeant Jollybuff.)

‘ I've brought your rent, Mr. Valentine,’ says the Sergeant cheerfully, ‘ two-and-six ; and here's another half-a-crown to help ye over Saturday night, ye know ; and I must ask ye to do without the spirits this time, if ye please ; it don't do ye no good, Mr. Valentine.’

The old man can always be trusted with the amount of his rent ; for the proprietor

would make short work of him and his poor old wife otherwise, and it is a pleasure to him to pay the demand on call and to take a formal receipt for the money in his rent-book. But the second half-crown stands on a different footing, and has a strong inclination to lead its possessor to either the Sun in Heaven or the Pilgrim's Rest ; in fact, as the reader must have observed, it is impossible for any denizen of Sweetbriar Gardens to get out of those Gardens, even to spend a shilling or two in the indispensables of life, without having to run the gauntlet of the blandishments of one or other of the confederate taverns.

‘You forget,’ says Mr. Augustus Valentine, putting one half-crown away in an old tortoiseshell snuffbox on the chimneyshelf, but dropping the other carefully into his pocket with a sense of importance befitting one who has been a fashionable tradesman and a vestryman, ‘You forget, Mr. Sergeant, that I am neither a baby nor yet a crossingsweeper. What am I talking about ? A little boy at school is allowed to spend his tip as he likes. Likewise a crossingsweeper

does it whether you will or not. I'm an independent citizen, Mr. Sergeant. And always was, I want you to know.'

'Why do you not,' says Viscount Malign, as the Sergeant leads him away, 'clean out that den and make it wholesome by force, and give the woman a decent bed to die upon?'

'Their name is Legion,' answers the old soldier; 'and I'm afraid the dirt that was carried away to-day would be carted back to-morrow. We must do just what we can and leave it.'

'And who produces all this misery and dirt and drunken degradation?' says the Viscount; 'I do not see how they can come of themselves. It is a maxim of all kinds of philosophy that everything must have its cause; where in this case is the cause, do you suppose?'

The Sergeant has it on his tongue to say the devil does it; but he scratches his honest head instead, and says nothing.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WIDOW.

IN the apartment under that of Mr. Valentine there lives a widow with six little children. She is an ill-favoured woman to the sight; but her dwelling is comparatively clean and almost wholesome; and her children are sufficiently well clothed and cheerful—almost sufficiently well fed. She is busily engaged to-night in preparing the linen for next morning; and, as a great deal has to be done before bedtime, she loses not a moment about her work; while two of her brood, the eldest, a boy and a girl, are equally industriously occupied according to their slender abilities—the girl in repairing the linen with needle and thread, and the boy in darning the stockings.

When Sergeant Jollybuff makes his ap-



pearance, the younger children, including two who have retired to rest for the night in one corner, set up a burst of joyful applause ; the two who are at work intermit their task for an instant to join in the welcome ; and the mother puts down her box-iron, the better to perform a profound curtsey to her visitor.

But when the Viscount Malign comes in, and, removing his hat, bows with his invariable grace, and indeed with unusual graciousness, to the entire household, it must be acknowledged that silence resumes its reign somewhat abruptly, except that the Sergeant asserts his well-known character for jollity by addressing to each of the bewildered brats in turn such remarks as he deems appropriate to the occasion.

‘ Mary Anne, my little woman, I wish I had somebody like you to keep my old shirts in repair ; I’m sure they need it. Jamesie, ye darn stockings with all the smartness of a spinning-jenny. Lie down, ye two obstreporous young rapperscallions, or I must ask the good woman to maintain discipline. And how do ye get on at school, Jacky and Joe ? I tell no lie, mistress, when I say your family

is a credit to you ; and would be a credit to the Queen upon the throne, if she was left as ye're left.'

' You're werry kind, Sergeant; the childern is good childern, or I don't know however I should get along at all. The poor, sir,' adds the mother, now addressing the Sergeant's companion, ' has sometimes a hard struggle on it, specially when the bread-winner is took away ; but somehow or other the Lord pulls 'em through if they'll but trust Him ; don't you think so, sir ?'

' No doubt, madam ; what you say is both good faith and good philosophy ; and I marvel that so few seem able to see it.'

It is the whim of the Sergeant to bestow alms upon this particular household in a particular way. After handing to the mother her dole, he gives to each of the children a silver coin according to the scale of age, and he enjoys the satisfaction of thinking how they rejoice with pride when he is gone in collecting the funds into one vast common stock.

' We also pay for their schooling,' says the Sergeant in passing downstairs, ' and that lad

at the stockings can do what ye call confounded proportion. I don't know what it is myself, but I look to see the lad Chancellor of the Exchequer some day, or perhaps Paymaster-General.'

'Why not?' says the Viscount. 'I question whether the Chancellor of the day, from what I know of him, excels either any more in arithmetic than in darning.'

The Sergeant thinks this a prodigious joke, and laughs so heartily that he has nearly missed his next clients.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ARTIST.

THE next clients live over the way. They are a poor artist and his wife. The art of the husband consists in the following process. He nails up on the wall of the room a dozen little canvases. He prepares his palette for colours of a single order—say blue and white. He paints sky and distance, and perhaps water, upon canvas after canvas patiently all day long. Next day he takes greys and browns. Next day perhaps greens, yellows, and what else may be in request. Another day he finishes and puts in spots of colour. And thus he labours for the week—or for more than the week, for he is slow at his work and not always well—upon his dozen pictures till they are finished. He buys his canvases by the dozen very cheap ; he sells

his pictures by the half-dozen pairs very cheap indeed. Sometimes the dealers whom he thus supplies are, as they say, quite full; and then they cannot buy, but can only advance money on a hypothecation of the poor works of art, so as to purchase at another time the equity of redemption for a small sum indeed. The artist's wife, once a ladylike girl, thought it a fine thing to 'run away with her drawing-master'; this is the end of it. A few shillings slipped in an unobservable way into the woman's hand as the Sergeant is leaving the room on a Saturday evening, become very welcome. The Sergeant would buy his pictures, but that it is against his rules to engage in trade. Besides, there is, he says, a drop of drink at the bottom of the business, as usual.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE MISCELLANEOUS POOR.

FROM one squalid room to another the Sergeant and his unwonted companion visit more than twenty of such pensioners—the cream, the Sergeant explains, of the neighbourhood. A sick genteel woman, whose husband drinks; a paralysed genteel man, whose wife drinks; four little genteel children nursed by a fifth, whose parents both drink; to all of whom the weekly help has to be handed in the shape of orders for goods. An old couple who are only misers, and who would starve outright before they would touch their little hoard. A number of young people too early married, or not, with heaps of little children sprawling on the floor. A number of miserable old women living alone; a number of still more miserable old

men living alone. Shiftless widows ; weary sempstresses ; people out of work. People in torpor ; people in pain ; people in tears. Upstairs to the attics, and down again ; downstairs to the cellars, and up again ; penetrating dismal alleys ; groping in black passages ; contending with many filthy odours ; encountering, it must be owned in truth, many filthy things ; it is becoming more than late before the hearty missionary declares his work done for the night. But, in order to show that he is not so much used up as he seems, he playfully squeezes the hand of Viscount Malign with a parting grip that is more than usually severe. The Viscount returns the grasp ; in a way that makes Sergeant Jollybuff's finger-ends tingle ; and, as he blows upon them in walking off, the soldier cannot help thinking this is as strange a customer as ever he saw.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

UTTERLY CAST OUT.

HIS EXCELLENCY, in walking towards the livery stable where he has left his carriage, is pleased to pass round by one of the bridges. It is a toll-bridge, and at this late hour the passengers who make use of it are very few. A woman, veiled, is gazing over the parapet. The Viscount stops beside her.

‘Well, sir,’ says the woman, ‘what do you want?’

‘You are meditating suicide.’

‘Oh dear no!’

‘Then let me escort you off the bridge.’

‘What am I to understand by that, sir? I am a respectable person; and if it is my pleasure to seek a little fresh air on this bridge, who are you, may I ask, to take offence?’



‘I take no offence, madam ; and I hope I give none ; but this bridge has an evil reputation in respect of what I have suggested.’

The Viscount glances searchingly into her face.

‘Tell me truly, now—’ he says.

‘My purpose, sir—and why I should have to reveal it to you is more than I can divine—my purpose is to give my destiny the slip, of course.’

‘Why so ?

‘Because I am miserable. Is not that enough ? I have been a happy wife and mother. Now I am neither. I have possessed a gracious circle of friends. Now I am friendless and forsaken. I have had equipages—I have had servants at my call. Now I have not even a dog. I have been clothed in purple and fine linen, and have fared sumptuously every day. Now I am in tatters, and am starving. I have been presented at Court. Now I shiver on the Bridge of Sighs. I have been beautiful. Look at me now ! Oh, this hair ! They have kissed it rapturously, like fools before a

goddess. It is not yet grey even now ; and it hangs limp and dank like weeds. Can you tell me why one's hair becomes so wet in such extremity as mine, although there is no rain ? Once I had a sister. Now I have none. Alas, alas ! husband and child and sister ! Don't you see them there—all three together ? Just where there is a deeper shadow on the water—don't you see them ?

‘ Poor forsaken spirit ! ’ says the Viscount, ‘ let me see you to a place of safety ; I will offer you no harm.’

‘ You will offer me no harm ! That is what they always said—I will offer you no harm. O man, man, man ! Woman needs no devil here to tempt her ; man is the destroyer—the roaring lion—the seeker of whom he may devour ! ’

With a frantic bound, the woman has leaped into the river !

Viscount Malign, ever ready, throws off his heavy coat and heavy boots, and, passing to the other side of the bridge, drops lightly into the water. It is just as the suicide has come to the surface again, drifting down with the tide. She is insensible ; he swims

swiftly with her to the nearest wharf. The night is dark, but a dim lamp upon the wharf shows him for the first time the features of the woman. As he looks into her face, he utters her name, and she recovers her senses suddenly.

‘Why have you rescued me, Viscount Malign? You know who I am. You knew my sister. She died for the loss of her lover. How could I help it? He died too. He died for my sake, they said. Why should I care? You knew my husband. He died because he was in the way. Well, it was a mistake of mine to marry. It was mightily inconvenient, Viscount Malign. You know that my little child was very much in the way too. It was a great deal better gone. Now do you wish to save me, Viscount Malign?’

‘No.’

‘Then let me go.’

‘I will.’

The woman steps down to the edge of the wharf, and slips into the water.

His Excellency goes on the bridge again, and resumes his garments.

‘You’re very wet to-night, sir,’ says the toll-keeper, as he passes through the gate.

‘Yes, I have been in the water.’

‘Good-night, sir,’ says the toll-keeper at the other end, as he passes off the bridge, ‘good-night.’

‘Good-night,’ says his Excellency; ‘good-night.’

He finds his horses waiting for him in harness. In a few minutes he is on his way homeward. The coachman sits on the box as solemnly as a Lord Chief Baron. The high-stepping black horses lose no time on the road. His Excellency’s lamps light up the dark hedgerows as the equipage passes swiftly out into the country. The bell rings as it reaches the gate-lodge of Mount Medusa. The gate opens to let it pass through. Keops stands at the open door of the mansion. His Excellency enters the hall and passes upstairs. The carriage is gone. Keops waits. His Excellency reappears in dry garments. Keops solemnly marshals him to his private chamber, the Sanctuary.

‘I shall not want anything.’

Lais welcomes her master; purring softly as she rubs her cheek against his hand.

His Excellency walks up and down the gallery in silence, musing on many mysteries.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MASTER GEORGIUS THE ARCHITECT.

PROFESSOR GAY, F.S.A., is hard at work this morning. Hard work with him is the perusal of the Transactions of any local archæological society. It is hard work because of the peculiarity of the opinions which are sometimes therein adventured.

The antiquarian reader is a student who must necessarily be always on the outlook for something which shall be, so to speak, not only old but new. And here there is all the difference in the world between one class of antiquarian writers and another. Let us call them respectively the Antiquaries of the New and the Antiquaries of the True. The difficulty with Professor Gay, as with a great many readers of other sorts than antiquaries, has always been how to light upon anything

that is both new and true together. Indeed, the Professor, for one, is disposed to affirm in his jaunty manner that the bulk of the matter which he reads is neither ; not in any way true, and not even new, but as completely incorrect and as completely stale as any good old-fashioned, standard, exploded delusion can reasonably be.

The Emeritus Professor, therefore, is seated in his great, old, uncomfortable leather chair, reading *Transactions*. His attitude alone indicates how hard he is reading. He has one long leg drawn as tightly over the other long leg as human anatomy admits of. The two long arms hold before his eyes, as close to those organs as can be (his spectacles being pushed up on his forehead), the pamphlet which reveals to the world the latest speculations of a local archæological society. The Professor also holds a lead pencil between his teeth. This he bites savagely when local opinion is a little more courageous than usual. Otherwise he employs it for inscribing the book with manuscript reflections of the moment—‘Oh ! ‘Of course,’ ‘Nothing in it,’ ‘Old as the hills,’

‘Absurd,’ ‘Fiddlededee!’ and so on—so that any other antiquary, who happens to read after Professor Gay, shall be perhaps astonished, but certainly enlivened and enlightened.

Enter a familiar friend. This is a gentleman of some distinction, as any such friend of the Professor’s is very likely to be. He may be said to be notable, firstly, for his unkempt appearance ; secondly, for a certain quaint and eccentric way in which he contracts the muscles of his face, in order to fix against one of his eyes a tortoise-shell eyeglass attached to his neck by a stout, black guard ; thirdly, however, he occasionally allows his glass to fall by relaxing the muscles with a startling suddenness which is still more quaint and eccentric. Some people might think it is his principal occupation to fix and refix his glass in this way ; but that would be a mistake. His name is Master Georgius Oldhousen, F.S.A. ; his profession is architecture, but architecture of a highly advanced order.

Like the Professor, Master Georgius is exceedingly learned in archæology ; unlike him, however, he is of moderate stature and a little

squat. He is not exactly young in years, being five-and-thirty ; but he is in an odd way youthful in appearance, and in manners Georgius can never grow old. His egotism is unbounded ; but it is expressed in a way which, although always contradictory, seldom gives offence, because of the guileless exaggeration and perfect good-nature which deprives it of all force. If anybody ever thinks of contending with Georgius in argument, the hopelessness of the endeavour becomes apparent in a moment, when a glance at his countenance shows how childlike are his convictions.

The strong point of Georgius is a disdain for Common Sense. There is nothing he holds more completely in contempt—and he holds a great many things in very considerable contempt, if not derision—than this vulgar quality. His vocation is Art ; and perhaps it may be said that Art, as matter of Uncommon Sense, and that which is commonly called Common Sense by common people, cannot be said to run well together at the best of times.

In younger days Professor Gay, the

Reverend John Jacob Saint-Paul, and a certain Mr. Peter Oldhose, were close friends and companions. The intimacy between Mr. Gay and Mr. Oldhose was afterwards rendered even greater by the similarity of their pursuits, for Mr. Oldhose became a highly-esteemed antiquary. But in time death brought their connection to a termination, and Mr. Peter Oldhose, like his studies, became a thing of the past. The departed sage left behind him two sons and a daughter; in order of age George, Mary Anne, and Peter Theophilus.

The young people, as too seldom happens, reproduced in full the admirable characteristics of their sire; all alike became devotees of archæological lore. George took to architecture and an eyeglass, and Mary Anne to ecclesiastical needlework; Peter Theophilus entered the Church, and studied Cyprian, Tertullian, and Origen. Not only did they learn with avidity, but they speedily turned their learning to practical account. They improved upon the popular taste in their attire. They dwelt in the midst of a miscellaneous collection of old broken furniture

loaded with old broken crockery. The name of Oldhose was improved upon and became Oldhosen ; George became Georgius ; Mary Anne became Mariana ; Theophilus dropped the Peter and added to his name the title 'Clericus' ; finally, Georgius, in virtue of his profession, encouraged his friends to call him in full 'Master Georgius Oldhousen, F.S.A., ye Architect.'

'Ah, George !' exclaimed Professor Gay, 'here I am, my dear boy, up to the neck in a disquisition by the Reverend—what is his name, let me see ?—the Reverend Philadelphus Jones, Rector of Didgets-cum-Toze ; never heard of him before, but he's a prodigious ass.'

'The man's name's enough for me,' says Master Georgius, 'I hate all Joneses.'

'Well, he's on the local architecture of the fifth century.'

'Oh, is he ?' says Georgius, relaxing his facial muscles and releasing his eyeglass, which, owing to the adjustment of the length of the guard round his neck, drops against the buttons of his waistcoat with an emphatic

click. ‘Oh, is he?’ says Master Georgius the architect. ‘Indeed!’

‘Just listen—“It cannot be questioned by any patriotic and reasonable man that the particular mode of building construction employed in these shires at the interesting and important historical epoch which we identify with the expulsion of the Romans from our beloved and venerable land, must have been a return to wattle and dab. In this view of the case let us revert for a single moment to the circumstantial account handed down to us in the invaluable pages of the excellent Herodotus of the very remarkable mode of building employed in the great walls of Babylon.” What do you think of that?’

‘I say, do put that book down, will you?’ replied Master Georgius; ‘have a little mercy—I don’t ask you for much—upon a fellow’s pericranium. I’ve been going in for physiology, you know; and I’ve got an impression that bad art and bad archæology fly at once to my pericranium. I wish I hadn’t any.’

Professor Gay pitches the Transactions of the local archæological society into the

corner of the room, and now unwinds his long limbs and sits up to shake hands with his visitor, who refixes his glass in his eye before he can see what to do.

‘I say, Professor,’ Master Georgius the architect now remarks, in a brusque, easy drawl which is all his own, ‘what do you think of this pre-historic town they’ve been looking up? I’ve got my opinion about it; what’s yours? It’s magnificent! ’

‘I have not heard of it, George.’

‘Top of a mountain, you know, near the coast of——’

‘Oh yes, I remember. A fortification of loose stones and some foundations of huts, with a cromlech at the bottom of the hill.’

‘Well, you know, you may put it that way if you like; that ain’t my way of putting it.’

‘Not an architect’s way, I suppose; but I am sorry to say I cannot always follow you architects.’

‘I didn’t say you could, you know.’

‘They are too hasty, George, and too architectural.’

‘Oh, are they? I agree with you though, with one exception.’

The exception is evidently Master Georgius Oldhousen himself, and it is the peculiarity of this frank authority that he makes no attempt whatever to disguise his opinion of that exception.

‘I took the concern to be——’ says the Professor.

‘Concern?’ says the artist, dropping his glass. ‘I like that; a first-class military town.’

‘Military, no doubt; but considerably exposed. As a town, absolutely inaccessible; except to crows.’

‘Well, now, that’s levity; and I don’t like levity, you know, in archæology,’ (refixing his glass,) ‘I never did; it’s a serious business, you know.’

‘No doubt it would be a serious business to live all the year round on the top of a high mountain, scarcely ever clear of snow, and never quite clear of cloud.’

‘Who says all the year round? They would retire to the valleys of course in the winter.’

‘Going naked as they did, probably they would. I call it a camp.’

‘How could it be a camp? Directly they left it for the winter, or before they got back again for the summer,’ (dropping his glass,) ‘the enemy would take it. That’s one for you.’

‘A palpable hit, George. But what say you to the houses? Some without even a door, if I remember rightly; none with a window.’

‘Door? Get in over the top, of course; very quaint custom.’

‘A stone wall, a thatched roof, and enter by the chimney.’

‘I don’t mind saying yes,’ (refixing his glass;) ‘now then.’

‘But surely, my dear George, you cannot suppose——’

‘Why not? I can suppose anything I like.’

‘But you cannot believe——’

‘Can’t I? I can though, if it’s necessary. What’s the use of being an archæologist if yon can’t suppose this and can’t believe that?’

‘But what authority, my dear boy——’

‘I can always,’ says Master Georgius, quietly dropping his glass, ‘find an authority.’

‘Well, let me hear your opinion of the military town.’

‘I don’t think you deserve it, but I will. The fortifications we’re agreed upon. That’s something. The citizens——’

‘Citizens?’

‘Yes, citizens’ (refixing his glass).

‘Perhaps they had a Lord Mayor?’

‘No, I don’t think they had; it was a theocracy.’

‘Ah! perhaps they had a cathedral?’

‘It’s no use trying to laugh it off, you know; there is the thing to be seen—one of the finest things——’

‘A temporary camp, my dear boy; all built of loose stones; plenty of hands to pick them up from the hillside; defended for a week or two; abandoned when done with. That’s the common-sense of it; a temporary refuge for the wild men of the hills; possibly against the Romans, I grant you, but I cannot say more. That’s the common-sense of it, George.’

‘If there’s anything I hate,’ (dropping his glass,) ‘it’s common-sense. Any fool can deal in that; an archæologist is quite a different

fellow. I say that's a magnificent military town ; I don't care for common-sense, or any other kind of sense but the true archæological sense ; and what I always say is that no one but an artist can be a real archæologist. Nobody else,' adds Master Georgius, ' has any imagination or any faith.'

' Well, my dear boy, certainly artists have a good deal of faith nowadays. But how do you get on with your room ?'

This, however, is a question which requires a little explanation.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A MODERN GOTH.

IN the eligible leasehold house bequeathed by the late Mr. Peter Oldhose to his children, the ground-floor is occupied by Georgius as his professional offices. The room which was his father's library, towards the street, has been made the drawing-office for his two pupils; and the dining-room, which lies in the rear, the private office or *atelier* of the master himself. But as he has grown a little older and more experienced, the spirit of Master Georgius has revolted strongly against the modern character of these apartments; and, after several successive amendments, all in the direction of the Middle Ages, matters have at last come to this—he has determined to convert his private room into a 'Hall' of the thirteenth century.

The ceiling he has long ago adorned with beams and panels of deal skilfully stained to imitate old oak, the steam from a tea-kettle having been made to play over the work as an artistic finish, to remove the natural sheen of the modern but indispensable varnish. The windows also Master Georgius has filled partly with the bottoms of bottles and partly with painted glass in small quarries, from his own designs, representing King Arthur and the Knights of the Table Round. The walls he has hung with ancient tapestries, of no great pictorial merit and of doubtful delicacy, but of indisputable authenticity. The floor boards he has stained and varnished like the beams of the ceiling, putting up the cracks carefully beforehand. The fireplace he has ornamented with a massive chimney-piece of oak, accommodating a dog-stove and irons, unfortunately new, but in excellent keeping with the rest. Of the furniture we need say nothing except that it is very old.

But one thing which, more than all else, has troubled the mind of this ingenious architect at last, is the fact that the fire, in order to be an authentic fire of the period to

which he pretends to belong, ought to burn in the midst of the floor, and not in a hole in the party-wall. To his intense disgust, however, the freehold landlord of the house objects to this, for the vulgar and entirely unartistic reason that it would burn the house down. For some similar reason the surveyor to the insurance office—actually an architect and F.S.A.—objects to it also. The tenant has moreover been invited to explain how the smoke would be got rid of; nor has his answer been accepted as satisfactory when he tartly said he would consult the authorities. In these circumstances of difficulty, an ingenious gasfitter has contrived a manifestation of asbestos, which is to look like a pile of fagots in a condition of incandescence lying on a sound slab of stone about a yard square; and professional persons have been considering whether this can be allowed by the law. It is the declared intention, moreover, of Mr. Georgius to forswear carpeting for the room, and to go in for strewing the floor with rushes. It is his further intention to go in for occupying the apartment after the ancient manner, by night as well as by day,

and in fact to sleep here on the floor between a pair of quilts, with his feet to the fire. 'If a man is a true artist,' he says, 'he ought to go in for it logically.'

In answer to Mr. Gay's inquiry, his friend now has the satisfaction of stating that the question of the fire has been got over by the adoption, at a double rate of insurance on the whole house, of the contrivance in asbestos. But he finds a difficulty, he says, in procuring a regular supply of rushes for the floor, and he thinks of going in for the best oat straw, cut to the proper lengths, and stained of the proper tint. The bedding he has also ordered, and he expects it to be delivered this afternoon. If all goes as well as he hopes, he will pass the coming night after the manner of the thirteenth century; and he will be very much mistaken if he does not find it comfortable, cleanly, and economical, as well as logical, archæological, artistic, and patriotic.

Professor Gay can only hope it will be all that his friend could expect or desire.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WITH H.R.H.

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, in his exile near the clubs, has friends to dinner. They are his Excellency the Viscount Malign and Monsignore Saint-Paul. His Royal Highness has partaken somewhat freely of wine ; his guests very sparingly. His Royal Highness is smoking ; his guests don't smoke, they take snuff. His Royal Highness lolls on a couple of chairs ; his guests retain their seats at the table.

News has arrived this day of the demise of a famous bishop, high in the favour of Holy Church Catholic. His Royal Highness has somewhat bluntly congratulated Monsignore upon this removal of one who was shrewdly suspected of being his enemy. The Viscount Malign appears to watch Monsignore

with a sidelong look, to see what effect this may have upon him.

Monsignore offers the Viscount his snuff-box. His Excellency bows very politely.

‘I’m glad he’s gone, begad !’ remarks the Prince.

‘A very distinguished personage,’ says Monsignore, ‘and very popular with many. May he rest in peace !’

‘My friend will probably succeed him,’ says the Ambassador Extraordinary, bowing to Monsignore again ; ‘his deserts can scarcely be overlooked.’

Monsignore returns the bow.

‘And my friend also,’ says his Royal Highness, bowing to Monsignore drowsily, ‘at length wear the mitre. Influence, great already, much greater ; friends and admirers enjoy the benefit, begad !’

Monsignore bows again.

‘And the time will come,’ continues the Prince, ‘reigning Sovereign may be able to show an interest——’ But the Prince is becoming still more drowsy.

‘Which he will not forget to do—for his own sake,’ says Viscount Malign.

‘No, begad!’ answers his Royal Highness.

‘So true a friend of the Church,’ says the Ambassador, ‘will have his throne doubly secured. The affection of a free people, based upon the maintenance of holy religion, renders the Prince truly happy who is called upon to govern.’

‘Yes, begad!’ answers his Royal Highness, with one eye unmistakably shut; ‘*encore!*’

Monsignore glances for a moment at the Ambassador.

His Royal Highness closes the other eye, and the cigar drops from his mouth—almost foolishly, if such a thing may be said without disrespect. Unfortunately the Prince is a heavy sleeper when under the influence of dinner.

‘How is our young physician?’ says his Excellency, looking a long way off.

‘Still busy,’ replies Monsignore.

‘And what of the lady on his arm?’

‘All the world to each other.’

‘Exquisite sentiment!’ exclaims his Excellency, ‘glorious passion!’

Monsignore takes snuff, and actually sneezes.

Royalty is half awakened. ‘Pass the wine, your Excellency,’ says the Prince, looking for his cigar; ‘reigning Sovereign ought always to drink good wine, or he is not worth—’ His Royal Highness has shut up one eye again. ‘Yes, begad!’ he mutters, ‘and good cigars; leave the rest to Ministers; doocid convenient;’ and he shuts up the other. ‘Great admirer of constitutional government; blessing to the people; ring for coffee.’ He is fast asleep.

The Ambassador regards somnolent royalty with what might be thought a smile of disdain. Monsignore does pretty much the same. But both of these dignified persons are looking a long way off, and perhaps do not observe each other.

‘Still in love,’ remarks his Excellency again.

Monsignore presents his snuff-box.

‘How shall we act?’ inquires Viscount Malign. ‘Shall we let them pass unchallenged, dear Monsignore?’

Monsignore shrugs his shoulders.

‘It might be a pity,’ says the Viscount; ‘a very excellent young man.’

‘A very excellent young man,’ says Monsignore; ‘his father a very excellent person; both occupy a large place in my affections.’

‘Such a man,’ continues the Viscount, ‘throws aside the little trials of life as the strong swimmer buffets the insignificant breakers of the beach.’

‘Greater trials,’ says the ecclesiastic, ‘prove the greater man.’

‘And he is in love.’

‘It would seem so.’

‘And we are to test this love, Monsignore Saint-Paul?’

‘Not in unkindness,’ answers Monsignore; ‘not in unkindness, I hope, Viscount Malign.’

‘Oh no; in pastime, my dear Monsignore; the pastime that the—angels love.’

‘An excellent young man. His father was my early friend.’

‘A pestilent adversary, though, Monsignore, I should suppose.’

‘No doubt, my dear Viscount Malign, a somewhat earnest opponent.’

‘And the boy is in love.’

‘ It would seem so.’
‘ Godlike frenzy !’
‘ Your Excellency admires the youth.’
‘ If I admired him not, Monsignore, should
I trouble myself thus ?’

‘ Just so, dear Viscount Malign ; you
express the idea excellently well.’

‘ This is a king of men !’
‘ Just so.’
‘ And his love—a kingly love.’
‘ No doubt.’
‘ And the fair Countess Titania, Monsig-
nore—most exquisite of women—a—con-
fessed her lately ?’

Monsignore takes a very little more snuff.
‘ Oh fie, dear Viscount Malign !’ he says,
‘ Oh fie !’

‘ A charming woman,’ says the Viscount,
‘ very.’

‘ Charming woman ?’ murmurs his Royal
Highness ; ‘ I like charming women ; reigning
Sovereign ought always—’ But royalty is
asleep again. ‘ Yes, begad !’ is its concluding
sentiment.

‘ His Royal Highness,’ says the Viscount,
‘ is a cheerful companion.’

‘A delightful young prince,’ replies Monsignore.

‘In every way calculated to make his people happy.’

‘The trials of exile,’ continues the ecclesiastic, ‘have improved vastly the best qualities of his excellent character.’

A servant enters with coffee. The fragrance arouses royalty, sniffing the air as it awakes.

‘In men of exalted nature,’ says Viscount Malign, ‘the animal qualities—what shall I say?’

‘Yes, begad!’ says his Royal Highness, ‘know it by my own experience; seen it in horses often; and in women. Reigning Sovereign is nothing without good horses and fine—Do you actually use sugar, Monsignore? You surprise me, begad!’

‘An untutored palate,’ says the ecclesiastic, with his sweetest smile.

‘His Reverence,’ says the Viscount, ‘appreciates, no doubt, the sweets of existence more intelligently than many; I will ask leave to follow so authoritative an example.’



'I yield to no man,' his Royal Highness says—'in fact it becomes a reigning Prince to yield to no one in—'

'In all the graces—' says Monsignore, bowing.

Viscount Malign completes the sentence—
'Of refined existence, Monsignore.'

'Immensely obliged to you,' says the Prince, in whom the choicest black coffee could scarcely be expected all in a moment to restore the balance disturbed by the choicest wine.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CHURCH AND THE —?

HAVING now taken their leave of hospitable royalty, his Excellency the Viscount Malign, Ambassador Extraordinary, and Monsignore Saint-Paul, let us say Bishop in expectation, walk away arm-in-arm.

‘I fear,’ says his Excellency, ‘our Prince may scarcely come up to our hopes when the time arrives—if it ever should.’

‘I am sorry to hear your Excellency say so.’

‘A tutor, it is true, may help him.’

‘A tutor ecclesiastical does your Excellency mean?’

‘Of course. And so our young physician is in love.’

‘The father has just issued another pamphlet.’

‘On what subject, may I ask, my dear Monsignore?’

‘On what subject, my dear Viscount? The old subject; and treated in the old manner—in fact the antique manner of his Puritan sect. “The Precipitous Path of a Profligate Priesthood,” thus it runs, “or a little more Plain Speaking about the Perils of Popery.”’

‘I should like to know this alliterative old gentleman, Monsignore.’

‘You may see an excellent likeness of him any day in the Park.’

‘In the bear-pit; just so. And, pray, is this somewhat lengthy title of the good man’s brochure——’

‘There is more yet to come, my dear Viscount—thus: “A little more Plain Speaking about the Perils of Popery; whereby it is shown how the Devil’s own Ambassador hath got the Pig of Rome by the Ear.”’

‘What is the good man’s meaning there?’

‘Probably he has none, except in so far as a little malice may chance upon significance.’

‘Well?’

““Dedicated—” he has the hardihood to

run on—"Dedicated without permission to Paul Saint-Paul the Pervert; in the hope that he may yet by God's grace be plucked out of the Pepper-pot of Pandemonium!" What do you think of that?

'A most ingenuous old gentleman.'

'But that is not all even yet. Seven copies of this pestilent production reach me by post on seven successive days, accompanied by seven successive private letters to this effect—

'"MY DEAR PAUL,

'"Having misgivings concerning the post, I send you again my last venture—one more little pebble from the brook, which I have by God's help slung at the Goliath of Antichrist. Commending it to your careful examination, and praying daily, although I confess with little hope, that you may be rescued from the Roaring Lion,

'"I remain, my dear Paul,

'"Your faithful uncle and friend."

'Do you answer the letters, Monsignore?'

'Always.'

'Do you read the books?'

‘I read the books; they are very good books. I cannot but admire the vigour of the old man’s logic. Like all other argumentation of the polemical sort, grant the premises and the conclusions are irresistible.’

‘No doubt. I have always felt much respect, my dear Monsignore, for the ancient manner of meeting such argumentation—force by force—authority of one kind by authority of another.’

‘It is the only sufficient way, your Excellency, historically.’

‘A cool seclusion a most effective reply to heated logic, especially if underground.’

‘Its conclusiveness cannot be disputed, I say, historically.’

‘And such a thing as irons, or even——’

‘Most effectual, my dear Viscount, I am sorry to say.’

‘And our young physician, Monsignore, is, I have no doubt, the apple of his father’s eye.’

‘Quite so, my dear Viscount Malign, quite so.’

‘And he is in love!—Delicious rapture!’

‘I suppose it is.’

‘And the Countess Titania is as charming as ever?’

‘Charming, my dear Viscount? Most fascinating?’

‘And her equally charming brother the Count Oberon? We must not forget the Count Oberon.’

Monsignore’s hand trembles on his Excellency’s arm. ‘A very fascinating young man,’ he says in a weak voice.

‘Does your Reverence confess this delightful Count as well as the delightful Countess?’

Monsignore has not heard the question possibly.

The two friends walk a little farther in silence, and then part. The Viscount’s equipage is not far off.

Having directed his servant to drive home, the Ambassador is now leaning back in one corner of the carriage with his eyes closed. Across his inflexible face a shade of what might be distress flits from time to time as he reflects. ‘And the fair young maiden,’ he says, ‘must she also—so feeble and so sweet—be thus destroyed? How the

sly priest grasps at this ! The youth in love ; so also the maiden :—fascinating Titania ; fascinating Oberon :—double temptation ; double guilt ; double ruin :—mutual outrage ; mutual shame ; mutual horror, hatred, revenge ! Why must I drive them to this terrible shipwreck ? Alas ! it is no new task. Our work must be done—it must be done. *I* hesitate ? Why should *I* hesitate ? It has to be done !

Monsignore Saint-Paul walks homeward in a more than usually thoughtful mood.

‘ This old zealot,’ he says, ‘ is the bane of my existence. From the height of my dignity, so called, I might despise him and his assaults, but former associations bind me fast. And this high dignity, whatever else may be said of it, is not a thing of sheer submissiveness. Other priesthoods may obey, we command. Others may bear injury with complacency, we punish interference with promptitude. Whether it be the thunderbolts of heaven that we wield, or the poisoned shafts of hell, let foolish men and women determine as they may ; it is enough for me that I throw a dart when I can—I cannot always. Why should I not revenge myself

upon a lifelong enemy? Why not accept the readiest means and the most effectual? I marvel not a little at the squeamishness of our Ambassador. What is the boy to him? What the girl? Why should we be driven to talk of the end justifying the means, as some say? Why should I plead that the overthrow of a heretic is worth ten thousand times the ruin of a pair of puling lovers? It is enough for me that this will do that, or that this; I ask no more. But it is well; my terrible Viscount is only coquetting with his work; that is clear. But I should scarcely have thought of the charming Count Oberon; I confess the Viscount has distanced me there. The Viscount's *finesse* is grand. It is his profession. It is not mine. At least—however, the die is cast. Here Parson John Jacob, there his beloved son; here the beloved son, there his thrice-beloved *inamorata*; what a broil! Julian and the pretty Titania; Madonna and the delightful Oberon; infatuation furious against infatuation; wreck dashing against wreck; ruin tumbling on the head of ruin; ha, ha! And the old Spartan in his virtue looking on

amazed, paralysed, shattered! And the inflexible fates with passionless eyes spinning the thread of destiny—directed by the Church and the—and the Viscount Malign! And the silly conscience of one's schoolboy days, scarce yet extinguished by philosophy, whispers of a Hereafter! Bah! where is this Hereafter? Is not *now* enough?

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE PRIEST'S DREAM.

WHEN the Ambassador Extraordinary has entered his Sanctuary, and Keops has closed the door, Lais, lying in the farther alcove, suddenly spits and snarls. Her master, looking towards the quarter where she lies, near the fascinating figure of poor Samson's sorceress, perceives an unexpected form rising from the reflected depth below. Another moment and Monsignore Saint-Paul is revealed. It is thus many a time, by the mysterious dreaming of electric thought, that the Ambassador receives uninvited visitors ; the unconsciousness of a moment the intercommunion of an hour.

‘Welcome, Monsignore, ever welcome !’ says the Viscount gaily ; ‘so your consecrated thoughts run still on me ?’

'They do ; we understand each other ?'

'Quite.'

'The Countess Titania—'

'To bewitch the physician.'

'The Count Oberon—'

'To fascinate the lady.'

'And then ?'

'Love having vanquished love, my dear Monsignore, why ask me to say what then ?'

'Fools will be turned to fiends.'

'Fools, as you say so well, to fiends.'

'And in the hellish warfare that results—'

'Your friend the alliterative Puritan will no doubt—'

'He will go mad, Viscount !'

'As beseems so violent an enemy of Holy Mother Church, your Reverence.'

'Precisely so ; your *finesse* is exquisite. I never should have thought of the Count Oberon—I confess I never should have thought of him.'

Monsignore begins to pace the marble floor of the Sanctuary with hurried and uncertain steps.

Lais bounds up; regards the troubled figure with alarm and hate.

The priest suddenly stops.

‘To what end, O tempter of my soul! can all this lead?’

‘Tempter of thy soul! Thy soul, my dear Monsignore Saint-Paul, it seems to me, is far above temptation.’

‘When I was a youth, Viscount Malign, I believed, and Heaven helped my unbelief. Now——!’

‘Well, my dear Monsignore, by all means believe again. If I can assist you, pray command me.’

‘What shall I believe?’ He covers his eyes with his hand. ‘Learning has driven out the last vestige of faith; knowledge has swept the chambers of my judgment clear and clean; and there is left—absolutely nothing—nothing—nothing!’

The Ambassador shrugs his shoulders.

‘Believe,’ he says with a smile, ‘at least in me.’

The priest wrings his hands in agony.

‘Not even in you—a dream, a phantasm, and no more.’

‘ But your professed faith, dear Monsignore, as I am told, is an admirable one—a most convenient and most satisfying one—especially for a mind so unembarrassed by belief. Intellect, dear Monsignore, is not overstrained with struggling to know ; conscience is not harassed with ill-conditioned scruples ; he who believes nothing may believe what he pleases ; he who so amiably resolves to accommodate himself to the custom of mankind accepts authority once for all ; he who inquires no farther, is relieved from all misgivings, released from all hazards. If I were in search of a faith, my dear Monsignore—which I am not—I should probably adopt one so extremely comfortable as this. I cannot advise you better. I have known you long ; I cannot advise you better.’

‘ I am tired of hypocrisy, Viscount Malign ! When I perform the sacred offices I dare not look up at that before which I kneel ; the tender eye of the symbol of suffering love——’

‘ Calm yourself, my dearest Monsignore ; reflect that you are a most noble lord of the Church, and no whining penitent.’

Monsignore is again pacing the floor passionately. Once more he pauses before the Ambassador. Lais rises with a low roar, half of menace, half of terror.

‘Tear out my heart, Tempter! and fling it to the wild beast!’

‘Be composed, dearest Monsignore Saint-Paul; call up your courage. I have a bold plan for you.’

‘A bold plan?’

‘A bold plan, my dear Monsignore! Recant all these ostensible beliefs that seem to lie so easy on your conscience. Go to old Parson John Jacob, and make a clean breast of it. The chivalrous polemic will welcome you like a son, will weep upon your neck, will kill the fatted calf of controversy and forget everything but the memories of your fair youth. Marry a bishop’s daughter, and gather about you a cluster of sweet little girls like their mother and brave boys like yourself. Become a respected archdeacon and perform archidiaconal functions——’

Monsignore glares at the Ambassador Extraordinary with an angry scowl. His Excellency regards him with a cold contemptuous

smile. Heaving a long drawn sigh of wretchedness, the priest looks wildly around him. An echo as of laughter seems to float about the vaulted roof. A thousand eyes are fixed upon him in disdain.

‘The dead,’ he cries, ‘know the secret !

Lais lays her vicious head wearily upon her paws ; the figure of Monsignore Saint-Paul has vanished !

Viscount Malign seats himself on a couch, as if glad to be alone again. Lais, at his call, creeps to his side and looks up in his calm, colourless face.

‘The dead,’ he whispers, ‘fair Lais, know the secret !

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LIFE IN THE GARDENS.

SWEETBRIAR GARDENS and the blind alleys that open out of that unpleasing thoroughfare are of course choke-full of population. Such indeed is the scarcity of what are called respectable lodgings in the neighbourhood, and so well is it understood that the Gardens are quite respectable—that is to say that they harbour no ruffians of the basest sort or thieves of too common notoriety, but only commonplace drinking and quarrelling people with nothing beyond a commonplace uncertainty about the law of property and of assault—that it is ordinarily said you can scarcely get a room in the Gardens for love or money. Perhaps this conduces also as much as anything else to the unsavoury state of the houses ; for, inasmuch as the occupa-

tion of them is so much in request, it naturally follows that the occupants will be the less particular about their condition, not to say the less ready to assail the proprietor's rent-collector with those demands for repairs which a proprietor of such property likes so ill to hear.

When, therefore, Sergeant Jollybuff has established himself as general philanthropist in command of Sweetbriar Gardens, with young Julian Saint-Paul as his medical staff, it will be readily understood that these well-meaning persons have taken a good deal of work in hand. Sheer poverty abounds, to begin with. Unwholesomeness of body, soul, and spirit, jointly and severally, is quite as prevalent. Through the primary evil of an uncomfortable dwelling there is encouraged almost universally that habit of inveterate tippling which, where it does not directly spring from a sense of discomfort at home, is always so effectually promoted by that unhappy incident. Irreligion of course is rife. The grossest ignorance of all that is learnt at school embraces the greater part of the adult inhabitants. Even the children are in most

cases denied the benefit of instruction, although of late freely offered ; the younger ones being too irregular in their attendance, and the elder too much occupied—perhaps in juvenile business, perhaps in less praiseworthy pursuits. A condition of chronic violence and petty crime has no inconsiderable share in augmenting the misery of the place, when the imprisonment of parents leaves little children destitute, and fights and feuds make the night horrible or convert the weekly day of rest into a day of battle. It would be superfluous to say that the officials of the workhouse and those of the police alike have abundant exercise in the Gardens. Nor must it be forgotten that both are generally regarded as the enemies, certainly never as the friends, of the commonwealth ; and at the best are met with a lowering glare of armed neutrality by almost every resident in the place. To people so circumstanced the jovial beneficence of Sergeant Jollybuff comes with all the greater welcome and authority because it is marked by something like their own reckless freedom from restraint; while the persevering and kind attendance of

Julian Saint-Paul upon the sick and the diseased is enhanced in value, even beyond what is due to connection with his popular colleague, by the circumstance that the medical officer of the parish happens to be both brusque and busy.

CHAPTER XL.

DEATH IN THE GARDENS.

IT is easy to look in upon the old soldier and the young physician at their daily work. The scene is in a wretched alley called Love Lane, and in a garret room. On a mean and unclean bed there lies a man, scarcely yet in middle life; not long ago healthy and robust, now very near the end of a hopeless illness. Once he was prosperous; now he is utterly destitute. Besides his miserable bed there is absolutely nothing to furnish the room, except some old boxes which serve for stools and table. A relative at a distance, who knows but little of his circumstances, has for years paid, in a spirit of something like indignation, the paltry rent of his room; or he would have been better cared for in the poorhouse. How he has contrived to find

food, as is the case in too many other instances in Sweetbriar Gardens, has been a mystery to his neighbours ; but for several weeks past he has been entirely dependent upon the Sergeant and the doctor, whose attentions have been supplemented by those of a pauper woman, an invalid, who dwells alone in the adjoining room, and, as the phrase goes, does a little needle-work, and whose own devotion to the gin-bottle is not so great as to be a bar to her benevolence.

‘How do you feel now?’ inquires the young doctor, seating himself on one of the boxes and pressing the hand of his patient gently.

The dying man gazes up into his face with the stare of a stone, as his parched lips open in reply. What he says he has said a score of times before : it is ever on his mind.

‘I have not seen her for fifteen years, gentlemen, on my honour ; and I cannot tell you what has become of her. I have sought for her everywhere, gentlemen. Why she left me I was never able to discover. I would have gladly taken her home again any day

these fifteen years. I have never felt any enmity towards her—God forbid !

‘ Cert’nly not !’ says Sergeant Jollybuff ; ‘ so you must cheer up, friend, and give the doctor here a chance, don’t you see !’

‘ You are very kind, sir, very kind, to a poor fellow who can never repay you. I thank you very much. But I would take her to my bosom now, after all these years, as a fond mother would caress an erring child. Oh ! she is still my own—my own ! Have you any idea why she should have left me ?’

‘ Cert’nly,’ says the honest Sergeant, ‘ twas the devil done it ; ‘tis just the sort of thing he doos.’

‘ Perhaps so ; she could not have been herself when she went away.’

‘ Try,’ interposes Julian, ‘ to think of your trouble less hopelessly, my poor friend ; think that she has perhaps preceded you to a haven of rest, where I trust she will be the first to welcome you.’

‘ You speak tenderly to me, sir, and I thank you from my heart ; but—but I know she cannot be dead.’

‘ Have she got such a thing,’ says the

Sergeant, 'as a name that would find her, so that we might take her a message, or the like ?'

'Her name, did you say, gentlemen, her name ? Her name, of course, is mine.'

'Too be sure,' says the Sergeant ; 'and where might she be quartered, in your opinion ?'

'I have not seen her, gentlemen, for fifteen years, upon my honour ;' and the poor man repeats his tale again. 'It cannot be many hours now, doctor, before I shall be knocking at the gate of heaven. I am no demonstrative man, but I have long had my feet firmly planted on the Rock that rises in this weary land. O my love, my love ! my love that loved me once, so long ago ! If I could carry her in my bosom to the Golden Gate, and bear her sin upon my shoulders, it is thus I would pray, and leave the rest to God :—“Oh ! let her enter with me if it be but possible ; or otherwise—otherwise—although it may be hard to say it—let us be—be—let us be shut out together !”'

A timid knock has come to the door ; the Sergeant rises and opens it.

‘Please, Sergeant,’ says a dirty little girl, ‘it’s Missis Pippins at Number Seven’s little Molly that’s took very bad again; and Missis Pippins at Number Seven says would the doctor look round, and be sure to ring the top bell twice, because the neighbours is out.’

It is a calm spring sunset-time. Even through the filthy air of Sweetbriar Gardens the glow in the sky is visible; as if the Golden Gate were being lighted up to-night, so that some very little traveller perhaps shall not miss the way.

Leaving the sick man in charge of Sergeant Jollybuff, the young doctor accompanies Mrs. Pippins of Number Seven’s messenger to the bedside of Molly. It is another very mean and dirty bedside, but there are at least a few chairs and a table in the room, and a cupboard for whatever there may be to put in it, although this may sometimes be small measure—apparently very small.

But the angels that have charge of the poor little soiled lambs of Sweetbriar Gardens, tending them so silently although so surely under the soft eye of the Shepherd,

have been unwilling to wait even for so short a time as it has taken Julian Saint-Paul to come to the baby's aid ; and when he enters the room the mother is standing like a figure of stone, frantically staring at the bed, as if at some magician's touch the very world were sinking out of sight !

The young doctor stoops down over the little pinched face with the large open eyes and the discoloured mouth that had been gasping for breath a moment ago.

'Your little one,' he says, 'is in heaven.'

A heavy step is heard on the creaking stair. The woman's ear, through all her delirium, catches the sound.

'It's my master,' she whispers.

The door bursts open with violence, and a man reels into the room.

'Who'r' you ?' he says to Julian sleepily ; 'who'r' you ?'

'O Jack !' cries the woman.

'Wha'rs' th' matter 'a' you ? wha'rs' th' matter 'a' you ?'

'O Jack ! Molly's dead !'

'All right. And tight.'

'The last of all of 'em—the very last !'

‘All ’a’ better, Bess ; got th’ money ?’

‘Money ? I’ve got no money.’

‘Berryin’-money—berryin’-money—berrin’-money.’

‘O you—— !’

The man raises his half-clenched hand,
The woman looks him in the face.

‘Yes, kill me, Jack, and make an end on it, do !’

And he might do it, and people might say it was the devil tempted him. But the young doctor interposes persuasively, although with authority.

‘Now go to bed, friend, and I will talk to you in the morning.’

‘All right. Talk t’ yer i’ th’ mornin’. Right y’ are ! talk t’ yer ’mornin’.’

The baby is laid tenderly, by the young physician’s hands, on two chairs in a corner, and lovingly covered up.

The father is induced to tumble himself upon the vacant bed. Julian removes his neckcloth and his boots ; he sleeps the sleep of the drunken.

He has been turned out of the Sun in Heaven neck and crop ; the potman of the

Pilgrim's Rest has out of friendship brought him to his door. He has invoked a curse on both the houses by way of an amiable jest ; and he is happy, laughing as he sleeps.

The mother has seated herself beside the two chairs ; she shivers in the summer night ; her tears fall cold.

‘O my God, my God !’ she cries, ‘my God !’ But little Molly—if those tales be true that gentle spirits tell us—little Molly, no longer foul and faint and wan and gasping for poor breath, but sweet and smiling and of rosy cheek, gazing in wonder at the Golden Gate, her bright eyes twinkling at the bells—little Molly is as happy—as happy as her father is—happier she could not be !

‘I will call very early to-morrow,’ says Julian Saint-Paul to the sorrowing woman ; ‘pray keep up ; your little child is—’

‘Oh yes, doctor, better gone, better gone.’

The doctor carries with him, when in Sweetbriar Gardens, a bulky medicine-case ; it contains, amongst other necessaries, a spirit-lamp. This he has lighted, and has prepared refreshment for the stricken mourner before he leaves, although no more than a cup of tea.

‘Now you will promise me,’ he says, ‘to bear up ; I will call in the morning.’

When he calls in the morning the police are at the door. The mother has followed her child ; the father is in custody. How it has happened no one can tell ; such things always happen by accident. There was a noise in the room, and the sound of a fall ; but there are noises frequently in such rooms, and the same sound of falls. The man came out, and down into the street ; the sun was rising, lighting up the sky again even in Sweetbriar Gardens. He walked up to the constable who was passing along at hand.

‘I’ve done it at last !’ he said sullenly ; ‘it’s all owing to the drink.’

And the Sun in Heaven at one end and the Pilgrim’s Rest at the other stand jovial and bright in the fair summer morning !

And the people do not pull them down ; nor set fire to them ; nor tear their smug proprietors limb from limb ! Oh dear no ; quite the contrary ! arrangements are already being made for the coroner’s jury, who will have glasses round when their work is done.

CHAPTER XLI.

CROSS PURPOSES.

SERGEANT JOLLYBUFF, joyous as he is by nature, feels in no small degree scandalised when he hears of what has happened. During the next few weeks, however, he will several times visit the murderer amiably in prison. Finding him profoundly penitent because perfectly sober, not to say clean in person and exemplary in conversation, he will probably tell him that the whole affair is very much the devil's business after all. Some excellent persons will perhaps suggest in addition that a little judicious management may turn it even to good rather than to evil purpose, and land the refuse of the hangman inside the portal of Heaven's paradise ; whereas the slain woman, surprised un-

shiven, has by that unfortunate accident been all shut out for ever—in fact despatched the other way.

That Julian Saint-Paul is profoundly horrified is clearly manifest ; but what can be the use of his being horrified at the incidents of life in Sweetbriar Gardens ? The very reason of his choice of such a locality for his benevolent labours—what was it but because everything in it is more or less thus horrifying ? No doubt he may have scarcely known at first what a task he was undertaking in committing himself to the cause of humanity in this seething cauldron of vice and woe. No doubt he has recoiled again and again from continuing such hopeless labour. Ashamed he has been a hundred times ; distressed ; disgusted ; terrified. But he has by degrees surmounted the effect of such feelings. By degrees he has become so bound up in his work that he cannot leave it. For such is the labour of charity under the sun. The bad world gets no better ; it is almost worse to-day than it was yesterday ; it will to all appearance be still worse to-morrow. What, then, says alarmed philosophy—what can be

done? Nothing at all; nothing at all. He to whom God has committed the godlike work does not reason with himself about the possibilities of its performance; he performs it. Satisfied with the feeling that he is in some small measure ameliorating horrors that are still horrible, helping one or two of the forlorn along the rugged path that still remains as rugged to all others, this is enough for him because it is all he can expect to do.

Our young physician, therefore, is no doubt horrified beyond expression; but he has been horrified beyond expression many a time before, and he will be many a time again. Even to waste in such mere reflections the time which is so fully appropriated for active endeavour is what must not be done.

‘It is plain, Sergeant,’ says Julian, ‘that we cannot prevent these very dreadful occurrences; it is almost idle to deplore them.’

‘Doctor,’ is the reply of the old soldier, ‘right you are; I quite agree with ye; and I’m getting sometimes a little afeard that the

devil will never fly away from Sweetbriar Gardins—not altogether.'

'Never,' says the doctor, 'is a long time.'

'Well, a long time it is; but we'll keep him at bay, doctor, howsoever, as well as we can; things might be worse if we didn't;' and the Sergeant laughs his hilarious laugh; 'much worse!'

'I suppose,' says the physician thoughtfully, 'we do some good.'

'I am quite sure of it,' rejoins the soldier with emphasis.

'I am not so sure sometimes that things could possibly be any worse.'

'Then, doctor,' says the Sergeant, his honest face beaming with humour, 'suppose we give it up, you and me, and let him have his way with the poor things; is that what ye mean?'

'We cannot, Sergeant; whether we succeed or not, we try; that is enough for us; the rest is in the hand of God.'

'Hooray!' replies the Sergeant; 'forward!'

And day by day, and night by night,

they still pursue the labour that cannot be allowed to stop; for, says Julian Saint-Paul, if ever this bad world is to be in any way less bad, this must come about by the obedient toil of unwearied men and women even as the old unwearied Earth rolls round and round and asks not why.

CHAPTER XLII.

A CURE FOR ECCENTRICITY.

THE Misses Glorieuse and Gracieuse have come up from the country for a little trip to the metropolis, chiefly connected with clothing; and they have been inquiring anxiously, as the good souls always do, into the important question how their tiresome but beloved nephew is getting on in the world.

Having ceased to be shocked at his eccentricities, they have, in their opinion, hit upon one means by which, it is to be hoped, these eccentricities may at least be kept within bounds. Julian must marry. And, inasmuch as the dear boy is manifestly unable to look after money matters for himself, being in fact always giving away what little he has of his own—once his poor mother's—

instead of getting more, they have made arrangements between themselves for furnishing his house and setting him agoing. With Madonna they are simply delighted.

Suffice it to say that Julian enters to a certain extent into their plans. He acknowledges for the occasion that perhaps he is a little more enthusiastic in the matter of Sweetbriar Gardens than the visible results of his labours in that locality may be considered fully to justify. Without giving up the work, he agrees to think it is time he were doing something also to make a living. He agrees with Aunt Glorie, too, that the better classes of society stand in need of medical treatment quite as much as the worse. He has prescribed several times for Aunt Gracie by correspondence with great success. He is quite of opinion with both the ladies that he would be infinitely happier if he had some one to take care of him ; and he feels with them that dearest Madonna is exactly cut out for being his helpmate in all that pertains to a modest professional practice. He is not averse to the businesslike proposal of the ladies that he should purchase

a partnership with some elderly physician, of very high character and most amiable disposition, who is to be discovered to have a desire for a little repose without quite giving up work. He is even prepared to admit that in such a field of employment he might find duty as urgent as any. He is, in short, deeply in love ; and if the object of his affection, as not unfrequently happens, were unworthy of so much unreasoning worship, such a one as a tempter of souls, for instance, might find it not difficult to use this infatuation as the sufficient means for bringing upon his thoughtless head any extent of wreck and ruin.

But there is one point upon which the young man ventures to make a remark.

‘My dear kind aunts,’ he says, ‘I really do not see, however, by what argument I can persuade myself to be a burden to you in any way.’

‘Julian,’ replies Aunt Glorie, ‘don’t be a fool !’

‘My dearest boy,’ adds Aunt Gracie, ‘you have no idea what lots of money we have that we don’t know what to do with. And it’s all yours, child, in the end.’

‘Of course!’ continues Aunt Glorie. ‘Not another syllable, Julian, or I shall be angry.’

‘My own little fortune——’ says Julian.

‘Julian!’ says Aunt Glorie, ‘did you hear me?’

‘Julian!’ says Aunt Gracie, ‘it is disrespectful, you wicked boy.’

‘Gracie!’ says Aunt Glorie, ‘have you quite done?’

‘Yes, dear; I only wanted to say——’

‘Very well; not another word—either of you. It is difficult to tell which of you is the greatest baby, I declare.’

‘Thank you, dear, but I *do* think——’

‘Then think as you please, dear, but don’t——’

‘I admire the dear boy’s spirit, dear, but I *do* think——’

‘So do I, dear, but I do *not* think——’

‘Might I say one word?’ pleads Julian.

‘No,’ replies Aunt Glorie, decisively.

‘Certainly not,’ adds Aunt Gracie, ‘you unkind boy.’

‘Undutiful,’ says Aunt Glorie.

‘Unfilial,’ adds Aunt Gracie. ‘Have we not been mothers to you?’

‘God forbid that I should gainsay it.’

‘Then how dare you——?’ says Aunt Glorie.

‘How can you?’ adds Aunt Gracie.

‘I am shocked!’ says Aunt Glorie.

‘I am pained,’ says Aunt Gracie, ‘you—you dear darling boy, I can *not* help kissing you.’

‘Gracie! leave the boy alone. Julian, kiss *me*!’

The end of all this is that Miss Madonna Gay—who, although so young, sees the matter in a sufficiently practical light—co-operates with the Misses Glorieuse and Gracieuse in selecting a small house with a large door in a good neighbourhood, and in proceeding to determine with much pains how it shall be modestly but neatly furnished at a reasonable expense. Neither Parson John Jacob nor the Emeritus Professor is at all consulted; nor is the bridegroom-elect himself; the country ladies are of opinion that gentlemen are better out of such things, the best of them being more or less impracticable by nature. Indeed, so strongly are they impressed with this idea, from their own ex-

tensive experience of the male kind, that they impose upon Madonna, under threats of their heaviest displeasure if disobeyed, the preservation of the closest secrecy. 'Of all the tiresome things,' says Miss Glorieuse, 'in this tiresome world, the *most* tiresome, in my opinion, is a man.' The whole enterprise, in short, is to be a matter of delightful surprise. The establishment, when ready, is to have a genteel brass plate affixed to the door, previously inscribed with the name of Mr. Julian Saint-Paul ; the future owner is then to be brought in some state to take possession ; and after this Miss Madonna is to be required to name an early day.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AN INVITATION TO MOUNT MEDUSA.

IT is in utter ignorance of this well-intentioned conspiracy that Julian thus addresses his betrothed, standing with her one morning, looking out of window, in the drawing-room of the house in the Park :—What part of town would she like to live in if she had her choice ?

Madonna catches her breath ; thinks for a moment ; answers by asking where he himself would like to live. She adopts this course, being quick of thought, for two reasons. In the first place, she is mortally afraid of interfering with either the spirit or the letter of the instructions of Aunts Glorieuse and Gracieuse. In the second, she thinks it due to her lover, if she dare not do

more, to signify to him that his preference will be hers.

Julian sees the matter in this latter light. 'Ever thoughtful of me,' he says, 'dearest Madonna; I wonder if there is in all the world another love so good and kind.'

It must be owned that the young lady feels a twinge of shame. In an instant she has vowed to herself that this very day she must implore the kind-hearted aunts to release her from the danger of equivocation in the presence of one so single-minded and sincere.

At the moment, who is this that enters the room? His Excellency the Viscount Malign!

What brings his Excellency here? It is bright warm spring sunshine without; there is something like a shadow of chill winter within the room as the Viscount enters.

The fact is that the Emeritus Professor is just now profoundly occupied with a brother antiquary in the task of scrutinising a certain black-letter parchment which the latter enthusiast has picked up at a waste-paper stall for ninepence; and the Viscount Malign, who possesses a sort of learned half-acquaintance

with the Professor, having called, as we shall see, upon some similar business, has been asked to take a chair in the drawing-room for a few moments.

Never at a loss, his Excellency introduces himself to the young people, remarking gaily that the last time he had the pleasure of seeing them was, he thinks, at my Lady Aurora Dragonet's.

The young people both acknowledge their recollection of the circumstance. Who, indeed, could fail to remember meeting the Viscount Malign?

'A physician, I am given to understand?' says the Viscount. 'Truly one of the most noble vocations in life. And I believe you know that very remarkable man—I should be proud to call him my friend—Sergeant—I forgot his further name----?'

'Yes, indeed, a very remarkable man,' says Julian; 'I am indeed proud to call him friend, odd as he is----'

'Odd? Well, perhaps he is.'

'But there is a saying in the Gardens that he will not look so odd amongst God's angels, Viscount Malign.'

Perhaps his Excellency may be inclined to smile at the fancy of Sergeant Jollybuff—the half of him that is left—making his appearance amongst the angels, turned into a small-featured young person in white ; but he bows very graciously to Julian's remark, and expresses the hope that the lady is acquainted with the good man.

Madonna has often heard of him, and has occasionally seen him. She does not reply, however, in a lively way ; young ladies, as a rule, seem to be rather afraid of Viscount Malign when at close quarters.

‘ I had the—but I can scarcely say pleasure—of going with the Sergeant a little way on his benevolent round one evening,’ says the Viscount, ‘ in a place called Sweetbriar Gardens. How can it be that such places are permitted to exist ?’

‘ We cannot tell,’ says Julian.

‘ What cannot be discovered by philosophy,’ rejoins the Viscount, ‘ is not all ; where Philosophy ends, Police begins. Or is it that the law is unequal to the occasion ? Is such a place beyond the reach of law, or beyond its realm ?’

‘Both, I fear.’

‘That can scarcely be. Do you know what would become of your Sweetbriar Gardens if they lay within the dominion of some energetic prince of utter barbarism—say in tropical Africa or the remote East—or of some one like the potentates of primitive times?’

‘He certainly would not,’ says Julian, ‘surround them with protective laws, and apply the whole force of his government to prevent interference with the vested interests of drunkenness and vice.’

‘He would calmly—shall we say philosophically?—kill off the inhabitants and burn their dens, just as a cultivator weeds his ground.’

Julian answers absently. ‘There are some,’ he says, ‘that I would spare.’

‘I know an eminent personage named Monsignore Saint-Paul—of course, a relation, I remember—who might remind us how Nature works by waste. An extra soul or two, Monsignore might perhaps say, would never be missed. I have heard one of your great preachers—a very excellent man—discourse with much eloquence upon the purifi-

cation of this world some day by fire—by the burning up of such places, I suppose, as Sweetbriar Gardens.'

'But not,' says Julian, 'of such places alone, I fear.'

'Perhaps not,' replies Viscount Malign, 'perhaps not.'

Here enters Professor Gay, with the Viscount's card in one hand and his spectacles in the other, looking exceedingly blind, but exceedingly cheerful.

'I am so sorry to have kept Viscount Malign waiting—so very sorry to have kept you waiting, Viscount:—ha! Julian, my dear boy, how do you do? Can you find a chair, Viscount? Julian, my dear boy, sit down—Madonna, my dear, stir the fire—this room strikes as cold as a crypt. But the fact is I have had Trigonometer with me—I don't know whether you are acquainted with him, Viscount—a most able man—Trigonometer of the Museum—most able man—'

The Viscount knows him well—a most able man.

'Most able man. Well, what do you think? Passing along some back street this

morning—Trigonometer has eyes as keen as a hawk's—what should he see peeping out of a sack of waste paper but a black-letter parchment !

'Indeed?' says the Viscount.

'Yes; bought it for ninepence; the black-guard of a woman wanted half-a-crown; I offered ten pounds for it the moment I set eyes on it, but Trigonometer won't part with it and I don't blame him—I wouldn't part with it for twenty.'

'A most fortunate purchase,' says the Viscount.

'Woman had the audacity to value it at half-a-crown—ought to be hanged! Served her right to give her only ninepence—I would have had it for fourpence halfpenny.'

'And pray what does the document turn out to be?'

'Most curious indeed; a sort of award by one Sir John de Pickpenny, merchant adventurer, acting as arbitrator between two citizens of his ward in the matter of a she-ass belonging to one of them, the defendant, who, having strayed into the garden of the complainant, had eaten, as was alleged,

his wife's kirtle, of the value of ten pence—it must have been out of condition, I should think—'

'Very much indeed,' says the Viscount.

'So one cannot but admire the honesty of the complainant,' says Professor Gay; 'in our days he would have sworn it was worth ten guineas, even if he had had to resort to some legal fiction; but he puts it honestly at ten pence; which shows how superior to our poor times were the ages of the past.'

'And how did the umpire decide the case?' inquires the Ambassador.

'Well, Trigonometer and I both think the judgment a little loose; but we shall have another look at it. It seems the kirtle was green, and the ground was covered with snow; and it was therefore thought not unreasonable to argue that it was the fault of the snow more than the kirtle, and of the kirtle more than the ass. The donkey was hungry and took the kirtle for a vegetable.'

'Just so,' says the Ambassador, 'very natural.'

'And that was not all. The defendant then lost his ass—no doubt through indi-

gestion ; whereupon an issue arose whether this was due to the wool or to the dye ; the Worshipful Company of Woolstaplers maintaining that good wool was nutritious, and the Worshipful Company of Dyers declaring that good green dye was of the nature of a panacea for all the known diseases of asses. So Sir John de Pickpenny—I must look him up—seems to have had a tangled skein to unravel.'

'I don't believe the ass swallowed the kirtle at all,' says Julian, looking at the matter perhaps professionally.

'No doubt,' says Mr. Gay, 'we should go into the case very differently in these days.'

'But I cannot say it would be done much better,' says the Viscount Malign, pleasantly, looking at his watch. 'My dear Mr. Gay, let me tell you my own poor errand. I have had sent to me an antique dish, of some value, it is said, and of very remarkable character ; and I was about to make so bold as to ask you to come down to my house and look at it ; for I confess it puzzles me very considerably. I can drive you down at your own time.'

‘I shall be most happy,’ says the Professor.

‘In fact,’ resumes the Viscount, ‘an idea has just occurred to me. Let us make a dinner of it. I will venture to invite Mr. Julian Saint-Paul and this charming young lady.’

‘I’ll tell you what,’ replies the Professor, ‘let me bring my young friend George Oldhose; he is a great authority on porcelain.’

‘And Mariana,’ says Madonna.

‘By all means,’ says the Viscount; ‘I shall be delighted; and—we may as well have eight—what do you say to my friend Count Oberon and his delightful sister the Countess Titania?’

The day is then settled; and it is enough to say that the formal invitations are in due time all accepted.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE DINNER-PARTY.

THE evening appointed for the dinner-party at Viscount Malign's has turned out cold and wet.

Professor Gay and his niece, Georgius and Mariana, and Julian, go down in a single vehicle. Julian had intended to ride with the coachman and enjoy the air; but the weather prevents this. To have a second carriage to follow the first is pronounced to be absurdly like a wedding or the conveyance of state prisoners to the Tower. So the thinnest of the three gentlemen is decreed to make a sandwich between the ladies; and this is Mr. Gay. Nothing could possibly have answered better; and as the somewhat weak-kneed horses take them at a leisurely pace through the suburbs, the entire company

agree that a little crowding makes the journey all the more enjoyable.

But by the time they arrive at Mount Medusa every one is almost as cold as the coachman ; and the coachman's teeth are chattering in his head. As the carriage approaches the entrance lodge, the gate is opened and the bell rings.

‘Straight on and straight back,’ says the gatekeeper in a solemn voice, an octave below the usage of humanity ; and Master Georgius Oldhousen for one shivers in his shoes at the sound.

Keops stands at the open door of the mansion. The demeanour of Keops is somewhat reassuring to Georgius ; more so than to Julian : Georgius, his eyeglass fixed with more than ordinary decision, sees something delightfully quaint about Keops ; and quaintness is of course the architect's chief good. As for Professor Gay, his spectacles have suddenly become covered with condensed moisture — as sometimes happens with short-sighted persons — and he sees nothing at all. To the two young ladies the aspect of the house — which young ladies

catch at a glance—is decidedly dismal. To all the visitors there seems to be a chilly silence or a silent chill pervading the place, which is highly uninviting.

When, however, they are led by Keops through the cortile to the drawing-room, the scene is changed. The room is not brilliantly lighted; nor is it perhaps sufficiently heated, for, like the mansion at large, it is decidedly cool; the colours, also, are cool, and the floor of highly-polished parquetry has no covering except here and there a small Oriental carpet under a table or before a couch. Glazed water-colour drawings, of delicate and subdued character, hang on the walls, interspersed with porcelain statuettes on brackets. Thin lines of gold panel the ceiling and the walls, the walls of silver grey and the ceiling of white, slightly tinted with pink, which might symbolise, perhaps, a warm heaven above a cold earth. The draperies are of light blue, and the wood of the slender furniture is deep black ebony tenderly picked out with gold.

The host stands by a centre table; beside him there are a young lady and a young

gentleman—the Countess Titania and the Count Oberon.

Certainly the Count and the Countess are most charming people. The Count is about thirty years of age; the Countess perhaps six or seven and twenty; both at their best. Perfect in figure and in features, in dress and in deportment, in temper and in intelligence, in education and in accomplishments, it is seldom indeed that one meets with such charming people.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE ANTIQUE DISH.

THE Viscount Malign advances to receive his newly-arrived guests with a great deal of dignity and almost an excess of ceremonial politeness, and makes them acquainted with the previous arrivals in the same spirit of exceeding respect for all. While the ladies are seating themselves, the gentlemen exchange a few remarks on the weather, and remain standing. The Countess Titania, however, has already in a manner assumed the part of hostess ; displaying all that exquisite ease which might be expected from her appearance ; and she now leads the feminine part of the conversation—after an abortive attempt on the part of Mariana to introduce the subject of ecclesiastical needlework *à propos* of the charming pictures on the

walls — with sunny smiles and summer laughter away to the mountains of Switzerland and the plains of Lombardy *à propos* of the cold. The masculine element being thus left to its own resources, Mr. Gay is not long in remembering the great purpose of the assembly ; and, although his fingers are scarcely yet thawed, they itch, he says, to handle the wonderful dish.

‘ Oh yes,’ says the Viscount, ‘ it is not far off ;’ and, leading the way to a side-table, he points to an article of the size and character of a soup-plate, which lies there on an embroidered mat, with the light of a reading-lamp concentrated upon it. Professor Gay and his friend Master Georgius Oldhousen, it need scarcely be said, are at once absorbed in the silent contemplation of this object. The Professor has removed his spectacles for the purpose of applying to it the microscopic vision of his extremely short-sighted eyes ; Master Georgius contents himself with closing one eye altogether so as to intensify the keenness of the other—the one which operates with the glass.

The dish is no doubt a sufficiently rare and

remarkable specimen of porcelain manufacture. It is blue upon white ; and the design imprinted upon it is a pictorial scene. This is not a specimen of that kind of art which seeks to make up for feebleness of conception by fineness of manipulation or brilliant variety of colour ; on the contrary, the composition is bold and muscular, the execution free and masterly, and the colour serenely simple and unaffected.

In the immediate foreground of the landscape there is represented what seems to be an ornamental zigzag fence, or folding screen, not altogether regular in form and disposition, but parallel with the plane of the picture. Beyond this a little way there is, towards the left, and still parallel with the picture plane, a small bridge of three arches ; over which there are passing three human figures, all perfectly alike and at equal intervals ; while over their heads, in the centre of the picture, a certain feathery tree, no doubt considerably conventionalised, expands its boughs from a gnarled and dilapidated trunk. On the right of this specimen of arboriculture there stands a villa in its own grounds, surrounded by

unique conifers and other shrubs, and overshadowed by another tree of larger size and different species, bearing in fact instead of leaves a crop of fruit of globular shape, like pumpkins, in three horizontal masses parallel with the horizon. The bridge leads also to another but smaller building on the extreme left, beyond and around which there lies a lake of white water with still another villa and its wood occupying a promontory in the distance. It had now remained for the artist only to occupy two white spaces formed by the lake and the sky. Where the one of these leaves off, and the other begins, there is nothing to show; but on one side of the central tree there lies a vessel, hoisting one mast but no sail, and carrying on deck two cabins, and on the other side there are suspended in the air a pair of large winged fowls engaged in amorous circumgyration.

Omitting minutiae, this is the picture; and the margin of the dish is occupied by a broad pattern border, geometrical in character, which, although of equal merit with the rest, it would be less easy to describe. The dish is substantial in make and of opaque material;

it is much discoloured ; and, what adds vastly to its interesting and characteristic effect as an article of *vertu*, it is not only chipped here and there but broken in several places, and held together by loose metal rivets, so that it had better not be handled.

It must not be concealed from the reader that, while the two antiquaries are examining in silent abstraction this singular dish, the host and his other masculine guests look on with something like a feeling of amusement at their earnestness. They are all three accomplished persons, but not apparently in this particular department of genius. It is to be feared that Mr. Julian Saint-Paul is almost inclined to smile ; the Viscount Malign and the Count Oberon, however, being better bred, do not.

‘It is a beautiful thing,’ says Mr. Gay, ‘beautiful !’

‘Very fine,’ says Master Georgius, ‘magnificent in fact !’

‘What do you make of it ?’ inquires Viscount Malign.

‘Do you think it can be early Greek ?’ suggests Mr. Gay to Master Georgius.

‘No, it ain’t,’ says the architect ; ‘more Oriental than Greek.’

‘Assyrian perhaps,’ says the Emeritus Professor.

‘Well, there’s something in the border, you know, that I should call Assyrian,’ says Georgius ; ‘but that’s not of so much moment. Now, what do you say to its being the Adoration ? Those three fellows are the Magi, you know ; and if you’ll look close you’ll see that they all carry some kind of astrological instruments in their hands.’

‘Perhaps, sir,’ interposes Count Oberon with the sweetest of smiles, while the Professor is again scrutinising the Magi, ‘perhaps the gifts that are spoken of ?’

‘No they ain’t ; the gifts are in the boat, you know ; they follow by sea while the Magi come by land.’

‘*Mal de mer*,’ suggests the Viscount.

‘Now don’t ! that’s not archæology, it’s ribaldry ; but the style of the bridge is Roman, and that’s very curious—semicircular arches, you know. And so it is in all the buildings, you’ll find. But not in the cabins on the boat. They are of a different archi-

tectural style; the boat comes from the East.'

'What are these?' says Viscount Malign, pointing to the pair of birds suspended in the air.

'They are the heavenly host,' says Georgius; 'that's easily seen by anybody.'

'Oh,' says the Viscount Malign, 'very likely.'

'Yes,' says the Count Oberon with the sweetest of smiles, 'very likely indeed.'

'Then,' says Mr. Gay, 'this tree with the globular fruit might possibly be the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.'

'Certainly,' says Viscount Malign; 'the fatal apple hanging in whole hundred-weights, to signify the strength of the temptation.'

'To be sure,' says Count Oberon, with the sweetest of smiles.

'And this other tree,' continues Mr. Gay, 'this one in the centre, overshadowing the bridge and the three figures—this might be the tree of life.'

'And its ragged condition,' continues the

Viscount, 'would signify how persistently mankind have been snatching at its branches for six thousand years. It is almost torn to pieces.'

'And all to no purpose,' says Count Oberon, with the sweetest of smiles.

'Well, it's a very interesting thing,' says Mr. Georgius; 'magnificent! There's more yet. Look at this little edifice in front of the Magi; that's the stable, you know; you can see the horse-shoe nailed up over the door.' Master Georgius at last drops his eyeglass, which he seldom keeps fixed so long.

Mr. Gay has not observed the horse-shoe; he now applies his eyes intently to the spot indicated, and there he certainly sees the horse-shoe. 'Wonderful!' says he; 'upon my word, it's all as plain as the nose on your face. You see, Viscount, we did well to bring my friend to our aid.'

'We did,' says the Viscount Malign, 'we did; I am very much obliged to your friend.'

'Immensely,' says Count Oberon with the sweetest of smiles.

Mr. Georgius, elevated vastly in his own opinion by such high commendation, refixes his eyeglass and struts off to join the ladies. ‘It’s a magnificent dish,’ he says, ‘magnificent ! truly magnificent !’

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE DINNER.

THE Dinner is now announced by Keops. His voice is soft and melancholy, and his movements are absolutely noiseless. He stands erect by the open door, and looks steadily in the direction of his master.

Asking the Countess Titania to do him the honour to take the head of the table, the Viscount requests Mr. Julian Saint-Paul to escort her in. The Count Oberon is to follow with Miss Madonna Gay; then the Professor with Miss Mariana Oldhosen. Mr. Georgius and his Excellency are to bring up the rear; and his Excellency politely apologises to Mr. Georgius for having no lady to give him. Mr. Georgius says, with his usual frankness, it doesn't matter.

As the Countess Titania takes Julian's

arm, she throws a momentary glance into his eyes, as a polite woman no doubt ought, with an expression of graciousness. Possibly she thinks the young man is a little awkward, and this glance may be meant to encourage him—for the Countess is not oblivious to the fact that he is very handsome. But what makes Julian's heart throb ?

As the Count Oberon gives his arm to Madonna, thinking she may possibly be a little embarrassed, he looks into her eyes for a single instant with the sweetest and kindest of smiles. And Madonna, who in truth does feel just a little awkward in such superfine company, thinks very kindly of his politeness. But what makes her heart throb ?

When Professor Gay takes Miss Mariana Oldhosen on his arm, he smiles, and so does she ; but their hearts do not throb. Neither does the heart of Master Georgius the architect ; and certainly not that of the Viscount Malign.

The Countess Titania knows her way to the dining saloon by the state route. The open door of the drawing-room at which Keops stands indicates the direction ; it is at

one end of the apartment. The charming Countess, chatting pleasantly to her cavalier, leads the party across the ante-room and into the Sanctuary ; along the whole length of that weird gallery to the farther end ; then across the other anteroom ; and so to their destination.

It is not that the men of mark and metal in the chamber beyond the mirrors are more stern to-night than usual ; nor that the shadowy figures above and below are more mysterious ; but it must be acknowledged that the Emeritus Professor, for one, feels desperately cold, and that Mr. Georgius Oldhousen's teeth chatter in his head. Countess Titania with her pleasant talk, and Count Oberon with his, perhaps relieve their partners from a good deal of what might otherwise be an unwelcome surprise. Lastly, Miss Mariana certainly opens her eyes to their widest ; although, being a young woman of much decision of character, she shows no further sign of astonishment.

The dining saloon of Viscount Malign is as pronounced in character as the other apartments that have been described. Its lofty

walls are covered with panelling, divided by pilasters in a perfectly symmetrical range, standing on a shallow dado, and surmounted by a formal entablature, the cornice of which finishes more than four feet below the ceiling. The materials are walnut and dark wainscot, with a few lines of gold ; the ceiling, which is similarly panelled, is more boldly gilded. But above this entablature and under the ceiling, the interval is occupied by mirror glass, between secondary pilasters, so disposed as to exhibit the effect of an open peristyle with its own narrow frieze and cornice, carrying the ribs of the roof. The height of the main panelling of the walls is divided into three, so that a central range of panels extends around the room, and in each of these there is a relieveo. At one end of the apartment a massive chimney-piece, and at the other a buffet, are designed in symmetry with the rest, and even the windows and the doors are ingeniously included in the systematic arrangement. There are consequently no pictures ; and there is no drapery on the windows. The room is illuminated by a single globe of white fire in the centre of the

ceiling, so that there are no cross lights. The floor is of highly polished dark parquetry, on which there lie three small carpets, one under the table, one at the buffet, one at the fireplace. Statues of bronze on pedestals of dark grey marble stand at regular intervals along the walls ; representing such subjects as the passions of men—rage, hatred, and scorn ; and their outcome—in battle, murder, and ruin.

The dining-table is usually of an ample circular shape, accommodating when necessary, however seldom, six persons ; now that there are eight it has been extended a little. The central space is occupied with fruit and flowers, in gold, silver, and glass ; and in the midst there stands a single group of sculpture. It is in cold yellow bronze, delicately picked out with gilding ; and it represents what must be acknowledged to have struck Madonna Gay, for one, with a cold shiver. Her uncle may not have seen it very distinctly. Count Oberon and his sister have seen it before. Julian Saint-Paul is perhaps too much occupied with the lady on his arm. Master Georgius and Miss Mariana are of

too critical a turn, and too much occupied with other wonders therefore, to notice at first what Madonna has noticed. For in the middle of the table, in the cold yellow bronze, this is Apollyon the Avenger, triumphant over men ! and Madonna fancies that, instead of saying grace to God, the Viscount Malign bows to the image !

Keops waits behind his master's chair ; and there are three others like himself, dark Nubians, in lustreless black, to wait on the guests.

In spite of some of the associations which have been alluded to, the dinner is pleasant to a degree. There is no vulgar profusion ; no display of gastronomic science, far less of gastronomic eccentricity ; the wine is not even praised. An unceasing ripple of delightful conversation reduces all else to commonplace, and indeed throws over the assembly a mantle of decorum which elsewhere might be almost intolerably dull. Smiles there are, but scarcely laughter ; discussion, but of course never contradiction, nor even debate ; wit and humour, but no high spirits. Nor are the intercommunications

even characterised by that airy nothingness in which the company-talk of polite people takes refuge from the danger of making shipwreck either upon the Scylla of boredom or in the Charybdis of untoward allusion. It is all sunshine ; scarcely warm, but intensely cheerful ; and to the less accustomed guests the banquet seems to pass away like a short dream of unexpected joy.

Certainly the Viscount Malign, when he chooses to exert his powers, is a delightful talker, although one can hardly tell wherein his strength lies—it is a power so versatile and calm. The Count Oberon and his sister, also, are as charming in conversation as in person, never saying a word too much, never a word too little. Professor Gay, none the less, when drawn out by such fascinating people, astonishes himself as much as his more familiar friends, not by the intelligence of his discourse, but by its dignified vivacity, and, even when the subject happens to be archæological, its grave common-sense. Julian Saint-Paul finds the Countess so bewitching, and her ideas of the world so sound and yet so piquant, that he accepts her views and

appropriates them with a joyfulness which is new to him. Last of the gentlemen, the eminent architect is so exquisitely disciplined by such unusual surroundings, that he not only forbears taking advantage of a hundred opportunities for contradiction, but avoids the commonest self-assertion to a degree which renders his discourse much less instructive than it usually is ; his chief occupation in fact seems to be to fix and unfix his eyeglass while others talk—a very unusual thing at least for Master Georgius Oldhousen.

Of the ladies little need be said ; Madonna Gay, although seated next to Count Oberon, is nervous, because she cannot help glancing, not only at the centrepiece before her, but at the statuary which stands along the walls, and at the strange servants who pervade the room and anticipate every want like slaves from some unseen nether world. Mariana Oldhosen, with Mr. Gay on one hand and the host on the other, is so lost in admiration of everything, that she even forgets to talk about ecclesiastical needlework. Of the Countess Titania we have already spoken.

In due time the ladies leave for the draw-

ing-room. The gentlemen, at the suggestion of the host, follow them soon. The Countess is sitting down to a harp when the gentlemen enter.

The Countess sings of love ; of the uninquiring devotion of the child ; of the impulsive longing, growing day by day ; of the absorbing passion, the sting of jealousy, the hopelessness of the forsaken heart, the joy of reconciliation, the sweet rapture of permanent delight ! The reader will want to know whether the company talk about nothing on principle, at the full pitch of their voices, while the Countess is thus singing. They do not ; they listen in the most unfashionable way. Julian has never heard such song.

When the hour has arrived for departing, the first carriage which comes to the door is that of the Count Oberon. The Count and his sister enter and are driven away. Then comes the capacious vehicle which had brought out the rest of the company. In order to pack close, Miss Mariana enters first, Mr. Gay next, and thirdly Mr. Georgius. But before these three of the intended occupants have well bestowed them-

selves within, Keops has shut the door and the carriage is driven off. The reason for this is at once apparent when the Viscount's equipage follows to the door and Keops silently ordains that the remaining guests shall enter. They enter, therefore—Julian and Madonna ; and, with a parting wave of the hand from Viscount Malign, they are the next moment following towards the gate.

It may be noted, first, that Count Oberon has invited Professor Gay to drop in upon him the first time he happens to be in his quarter of the world—when he thinks he can show him some interesting curiosities ; and, secondly, that Professor Gay has asked the Count Oberon to drop in upon him at the Park and look through his collection.

When Julian and Madonna find themselves in the carriage of Viscount Malign, so unexpectedly alone together, it is some time before either of them can speak to the other.

CHAPTER XLVII.

ALL ENDS IN CRADLES.

SHORTLY after his guests have left, the Viscount Malign prepares to go forth for a walk. The night is dark and drizzling, and the church clock half a mile away strikes eleven as he passes through the gate. Reaching the high-road, he turns in the direction of the town; and as he walks briskly along in the solitude, he communes with himself.

‘The young creature was somewhat shy. She did not like the statuary in my dining-room. She was scarcely easy in the Sanctuary. It is not to be supposed she would be. My servants, too, distressed her. That would be equally probable; Keops and Kephren, Suphis and Usuphis wear not my livery for the delight of good young girls.

When the Countess sang so pleasantly, there were tears in the eyes of this simple maiden, passion tender and true, unbounded love in sweet and dutiful repose. But, O merciless fate ! the mischief is begun. An extra soul, says Monsignore, what does it matter ? And yet if her love prove to be but destructible dross—like that of so many others—if under the cloud of this impending battle she should only die, as thousands before her have died —How handsome the Count was—and how very agreeable !

‘But,’ the soliloquy runs on, ‘what shall I say of the physician ? His are no shallow sympathies either. He will make good sport for the fates, whatever may be the game in which they please to engage him. He will give battle, and maintain the struggle to the uttermost, or I am mistaken in him. How bewitching the Countess was !’

‘Why,’ continues the Viscount, ‘should such a thing as love make up in this supreme measure the joy and sorrow of humanity ? In its prosaic form the passion is but a vulgar instinct of the animal. The most uninviting things in all the world, from alligators to

toads, will rub noses together and linger ; so with scorpions or adders ; the he-donkey and the she-donkey gaze into each other's lacklustre eyes ; the baboon puts his paw round the baboon's waist ; the vulture kisses his mate. Absurd enough ; but without it this would be a very different world. If little people were to spring up like mushrooms in the fields, this would be a very different world indeed.'

The cry of an owl is heard ; the cry of an owl follows.

'No doubt,' says the Viscount, 'it is absurd enough. But out of this corporal instinct what a volume of mysterious emotion acquires eternal force and substance ! What rapturous joys ! what agonising griefs ! what fond affections ! what villainous hatreds ! what intensity of hope ; of fear ; of strong desire ; of shame ; of everlasting melancholy ; sheer madness ; irrecoverable wreck ! And all because this is a man and that a woman. What heroic self-denial ! what unspeakable tenderness ! what patient endurance ! what loyal faith ! what ineffable trust ! What worship, alike of the weak before the strong and of

the strong before the weak! Ah! and yet what treachery! How handsome the Count looked to-night; and how charming the Countess!

The Viscount overtakes and passes a waggon on its way towards the town. It is a covered van, drawn by a pair of sluggish horses. Under the cover there sit on the driver's seat an old man and an old woman, and there is a lantern hanging behind them, which makes the interior of their vehicle look snug and cheerful in so cold and bleak a night.

‘Hullo!’ cries the waggoner.

The foot-passenger turns in answer.

‘If you're on your way to town, master, have a lift.’

‘Thank you,’ says Viscount Malign; and he takes a seat beside the waggoner—or rather beside the woman.

‘For,’ says the old man, we'll putt ye in the middle, Jenny, and the genelman will keep the wind off of ye—don't ye see, old gal?’

‘Ha, ha, ha!’ laughs the old woman with singular cheerfulness; she has not a tooth in her head.

‘Don’t ye see my dodge, master?’ says the waggoner gaily. ‘I calls it clever.. Here’s my old Jenny’—she says to me a minute ago, “It’s precious cold, Job,” she says. “Well, mother,” I says, “it is rather a kind of chilly,” I says, “but we must wrop ourselves up a leetle all the more warmer,” I says. So then I see you a-passin’ of us, and I says to myself, “This here genelman can sit on t’other side o’ Jenny, and keep her warm,” I says.’

The old woman laughs again heartily ; she certainly has not one tooth in her head.

‘I am very much pleased,’ says the Viscount Malign ; ‘you are journeying late, master.’

‘We’ve all the way to the Market to go to-night,’ says the waggoner ; ‘and I’m agoin’ to leave the missis in town for a week or two, ye see, along of our youngest darter.’

‘Your daughter is settled there?’ says the Viscount.

‘Yes, sir,’ answers the cheerful old woman ; ‘she have been married there not quite a year, to a very well-doin’ young man, a carphen-der.’

‘How many more, may I ask?’

‘ You may ask and welcome,’ says the old woman ; ‘ we’ve none on ’em to be ashamed of, have us, Job ?’

‘ No, mother, not one on ’em,’ says the waggoner, ‘ not one on ’em ; tell the genelman how many there is, and all about ’em.’

‘ There are seven of them,’ the mother says. ‘ Job, he’s a boot and shoe-maker, and has been sextant to the parish at home, ever so long, and bellringer. Liza, she’s a widow with four children, all a-growing up creditable. Jenny’s husband, he’s a jobbing-man, and can bind more hay or pull more mangel in a day than ’ere another man round. Then John, he’s with Farmer Stubble, and has been with Farmer Stubble this many a year ; his carter, he is, and a very good carter too. Ebenezer comes next, and he’s getting on the best of all of ’em ; he’s a wheeler, is Ebenezer, on his own account, and only married the week afore last. Mary, she’s in service, and thinking of marrying a genelman’s coachman ; a steady lad, and they have been courting this three or four year. The last is Phœbe, and she have married this young man the carpender, who belongs to a village about two

mile away from their home, and who is in constant work all the year round.'

'And here's my old woman,' says the waggoner, 'no more the wuss than I am ; always as ye see her.'

The Viscount Malign looks into the face of the old mother. She can scarcely have been always without a tooth in her head. She can scarcely have been always wrinkled and grey. 'I do not quite understand,' says he.

'Always azactly as ye see her, master,' repeats the waggoner ; 'never a cross look nor yet a cross word all these years to nobody, and always a merry laugh, ain't ye, Jenny ?'

'Ah well, what's the use o' grumpin'?' says the old woman in her happy way. 'I never did hold with either grumps or dumps, I didn't.'

'A cheerful mother,' says the Viscount Malign, 'makes perpetual sunshine in the house.'

'Ah ! you may say that,' replies the waggoner. 'We've been werry poor, many a time, sir ; but we was never cast down—leastways she warn't—never.'

Viscount Malign leans forward for a moment, and casts at the waggoner a searching glance.

‘P'r'aps you don't believe me, master,’ says the old man, bridling up, ‘but if I was to tell you every day's work of all my life, I couldn't say different. Once I was laid up for near a year, and on the parish ; but mother was all the more cheerfuller, I do believe. Another time I took to drinkin'—’

‘Hush, Job,’ says the old woman, ‘it warn't so bad as that ; no, Job, it warn't so bad as that, you know, not quite.’

‘But it would 'a' been, my dear, if it hadn't a been for your pleasant face, old gal—as it always was, and always will be to me, if you was to live a thousand year and more—there! And *more!*’ concludes the waggoner, as if afraid of under-estimating the time.

‘And so, you see, sir,’ interposes the woman with a laugh, in order to change the subject, ‘our Phœbe's expecting of a baby, and that's the business I'm on.’

‘I supposed so.’

‘It comes to that in the end, don't it, sir?’ laughs the old mother, ‘it all comes to that.’

‘Well, I suppose it do,’ says the waggoner. ‘I’ve noticed in my time, sir, that whatever’s agoing on, that’s about the upshot on it. Just as my old gal says.’

‘Yes,’ says the old woman, ‘as I’ve said to Job many a time—haven’t I, Job?—“most everything,” I says, “Job, seems to me to end in cradles.”’

A carriage is now approaching. As it passes the waggon presently, the Viscount calls to the coachman to stop. The coachman pulls up in an instant, and the footman descends.

‘I am very much obliged to you,’ says the Viscount to the waggoner. ‘I can now return home in this carriage. And I hope, madam,’ he continues, addressing the old woman, ‘I have been able to keep the wind off you; and your conversation, I assure you, I have enjoyed very greatly.’

On descending from the waggon, Viscount Malign whispers a word to his servant, who goes to the carriage and returns instantly.

‘You’re werry welcome, sir,’ says the waggoner.

‘One moment. Permit me to offer you

this wrap, madam, to cover you a little from the cold. It may be useful another time.'

'Oh ! I couldn't think of it, sir.'

'Oblige me ; if ever we meet again you may return it if you must.'

With the assistance of the footman the old woman is now effectually wrapped in a large soft rug of fur, out of the midst of which her cheerful old countenance beams like the happy baby-face it once has been—and ever will be to the end.

'It is made of the skins of wolves,' says the Viscount pensively ; 'but even wolves—' He does not finish the sentence, but wishes the old waggoner and his wife farewell, raising his hat, to their astonishment.

'Yes, indeed,' runs his Excellency's soliloquy as he rides homewards, 'the good woman says well. In order that those little things may be brought into this poor world tenderly, and softly nursed—even in the direst poverty—rather than hungrily eaten or wearily cast into the water, all this vast labyrinthine edifice of passion is built up ! No summit of ennobling magnanimity too high for loving souls to climb ; and no abyss,

alas! of sorrow and despair too deep to be explored in agony! And the Count Oberon—truly a delightful man! And the Countess Titania—a most charming woman!

CHAPTER XLVIII.

NOLO EPISCOPARI.

MONSIGNORE SAINT-PAUL is in a pleasant humour to-night. The vacant mitre has been offered to him. And he has played one more move in the great game of ambition ; he has declined the mitre. He has declared for a higher flight, apparently. He has said *Nolo episcopari* in a way that will be quite understood ; very humbly—so self-denying a servant of the Church is he—but in a way that cannot be mistaken. He is in a pleasant humour, therefore, and sits thinking of many things. Amongst other things, he remembers that his Excellency the Viscount Malign has a little *dilettante* dinner-party at Mount Medusa this evening. And he wonders, very naturally, how it gets on.

‘ Pretty Titania,’ he says ; ‘ she is a charm-

ing woman ! And the exquisite Count Oberon ! I confess I should never have thought of Count Oberon. The Viscount's diplomacy is refined.'

But the smile leaves Monsignore's countenance suddenly.

'We shall have another pamphlet about this bishopric, I doubt not. These pertinacious philippics, foolish as they are, may prove mischievous some day. Something must inevitably be done. The honour of the Church must be avenged. At any rate, my worthy relative's attention must be distracted. I am glad the Viscount's hesitation has ceased. Pretty Titania ! But I confess I should not have thought of the Count. No, I should never have thought of the Count. I pity the young man, too ; I pity them both. But the Church—I should never have thought of the Count.'

CHAPTER XLIX.

ARCHÆOLOGICAL CONVERSATION.

In the hackney-carriage which conveys homewards Emeritus Professor Gay, F.S.A., Master Georgius Oldhousen, F.S.A., and Miss Mariana, almost as much entitled to be F.S.A. as her companions but for the invidious denial to her sex of the honour of membership in such learned societies, the scene is calm, the conversation intellectual.

‘A fine house the Viscount has got,’ remarks Mr. Gay, as soon as the little flutter produced by the withdrawal of Madonna and Julian from their company has subsided, I don’t think I ever before entered so fine a house of its kind.’

‘Of its kind,’ says Master Georgius, ‘ye: but nothing in it—except that dish, you know

—not a bit of anything else worth looking at ; all commonplace classical things ; even his footmen ; by Jove ! if I had four niggers like those—or Mongols or Caffres, or whatever they are—devils if you like—'

‘Pray hush, George,’ says Mariana.

‘Well, I will ; but I was going to say that if I had those four fellows, you know, I should dress them in something like a better costume.’

‘Black seems the Viscount’s livery,’ says Mariana.

‘I would have had them in turbans, you know, and parti-coloured surcoats,’ says Master Georgius.

‘Why not simply as beefeaters?’ says Mr. Gay.

‘Too late a period,’ replies the architect ; ‘for my part I would have made that house altogether of the beginning of the fourteenth century. The four Africans I should look upon as captive Saracens, and go in for turbans and parti-coloured surcoats, you know, as I have said, with high collars—enough to cut their ears off—and balloon sleeves ; no heels to their slippers—but I

don't think they have any now ; and hoods with liripipes hanging down behind ; and especially I should go in for the legs of the fellows being of different colours—one black, probably, and the other yellow, you know. Then I should have another fellow at the hall door, and I should make him a soldier, I think, with beaver, gorget, and camail, and jambieres, two-handed sword, shield, and axe—I would give him plenty of it, and have him a big one.'

'I should like to see it, of course, George, very much indeed,' says Mr. Gay ; 'but my difficulty would be with the house and the master, and of course with the guests.'

'The house is easily managed,' says Georgius, dropping his eyeglass ; 'if the Viscount will give me the commission, I'll have it all licked into shape in six months so that no one could recognise it. At present every part of it is more disgustingly classic than another. That long gallery—of course smashing all the mirrors the very first thing—I should make the Hall, with a good piece of it cut off at one end for the Screens, and a Porch there for entrance.'

‘But that would be on the lawn,’ says Mr. Gay.

‘So much the better; there ought not to be any lawn. Then I would go in for three jolly big bay windows; and the Dais would be at the further end—the dining-room end—and the Reredos for the fire in the middle of the floor, you know, like mine at home, with a louvre somehow or other over it to let out the smoke, you know. Then I should go in for a Minstrels’ Gallery of some sort—there’s plenty of height—over the Screens. Then the present drawing-room wing would be the kitchen and so on; and the dining-room the Chamber, where the owner and his particular friends, the ladies and gentlemen, would sleep—of course on the floor—leaving the hall, you know, for the commoner guests and servants. By Jove! what a fine thing I should make it! Magnificent! And then I should go in for doing away with all that rubbish of a cortile, you know, and staircase, and throw the place open to the sky, with very likely the well in the middle—no pumps, you know, and water laid on, and that nonsense.’

‘It would be a radical change,’ says Mr. Gay, ‘to say the least of it.’

‘That’s what we want, if any rich man would have the spirit to do such a thing. Then the upper storey I should very likely do away with altogether, and go in for new roofs of different heights over the whole. The basement I should simply fill up,’

‘The occupants of such a house,’ says Miss Mariana, ‘ought to be costumed *en suite*, George.’

‘Of course,’ says Georgius, refixing his glass, ‘I take that for granted.’

‘The guests also.’

‘As regards costume,’ continues the architect, ‘perhaps it might be done in this way. Have a wardrobe and dressing-rooms at the gate. People drive up; go into the lodge; take off their modern things and put on ancient; and then drive on to the house; and change again on leaving.’

‘But,’ says Miss Mariana, ‘no modern carriages, George, within the precincts.’

‘No,’ says Georgius, ‘what’s the use of saying that? The gate would never want to be opened. You quit your modern affair

and enter the lodge outside. You leave the lodge by an inside door, and get into an ancient carriage—

‘Or mount a mule,’ suggests Mr. Gay.

‘Of course. People would soon get into the way of it, wouldn’t they? I’m sure I should. In fact it wouldn’t be at all a bad idea to go in for it at home. I’ve got a little place between my two rooms that would just do for dressing. I’ll try it with my clerks. I know my clients would like it immensely, or they wouldn’t be coming to me; wish there were more of them! ’

‘You might find it take up time,’ says Miss Mariana; ‘but that’s all I see against it.’

‘All the better,’ replies Georgius, dropping his glass; ‘no one who comes into an architect’s office ought to be in a hurry; architecture’s a grave matter, you know, and not to be disposed of, as some fellows do it, flying.’

‘What about your builders and workmen,’ says Mr. Gay, ‘coming for instructions?’

‘There are two ways of dealing with them,’ says the architect; ‘speak to them through a grating in the street door, you

know, or make them put on a hooded gown, and peaked slippers over their boots. That's easy enough. By Jove ! I'll try it.'

'What did you think of the Viscount's dining-room?' says Mr. Gay; 'it was imposing.'

'No, it wasn't; not to me. To tell you the truth, I didn't look at the rooms. I saw everything was classic, and that was enough for me; all dreadfully modern.'

'The effect of the gallery,' says Mr. Gay, 'was very peculiar.'

'You may say so if you like. Some people would have their breath taken away; I only have my back set up.'

'I was vastly pleased,' says Mr. Gay, 'with the dish.'

'Oh the dish!' exclaims Master Georgius in rapture; 'yes, it *was* superb—magnificent !'

'If that were mine,' says Mr. Gay, 'I should have it mounted in silver and used for rose-water at table. Enlarge the rim a couple of inches with *repoussé* work, and it would be very fine.'

'Yes, it would indeed; but I should mount it in antique brass.'

‘Better still,’ replies the Professor. ‘But what’s the date of it?’

‘I should say about the date of the fall of Rome. There is a sort of Orientalism about the work generally — probably Hunnish; although the architecture is very clearly Romanesque; I shouldn’t wonder if it were done by a Roman artist, you know, under the inspiration of the conquerors; very possibly a eucharistic vessel made for Attila. We know that Leo the bishop of Rome went out to meet him with valuable presents; I should say this was one of them. In fact this may have been the very thing that for the moment saved Rome—nobody can tell. Certainly Attila drew off his army, and that looks very like it; it’s as good evidence as most.’

‘Perhaps it is,’ says the Professor, dubiously; ‘unfortunately a good deal of our evidence is conjectural.’

‘Necessarily so,’ says Master Georgius. ‘I like it all the better. I hate what they call plain evidence; one might as well be a lawyer, or a policeman.’

CHAPTER L.

GEORGIUS DREAMS.

IT will not seem surprising that Master Georgius Oldhousen should dream a dream after all this. He goes to bed, as we know, in a peculiar way, with his feet towards the structure of incandescent asbestos which serves him for a fire of fagots in the middle of his room or hall. Amongst other results, real or imaginary, of this disposition of his person, there is this: the heat of the fire necessarily induces the superfluous circulation to leave his head—where it has a habit of settling all day—and to collect in the lower extremities; a result, as is well known, which tends to facilitate sleep. But on this occasion, whether it is the excellence of the Viscount's wine, or the excitement produced by the inspection of the wonderful dish, certainly

Master Georgius has not slept more than an hour when he beholds a vision.

He is at the Viscount's house again; walking with his Excellency in the long gallery. Keops precedes them in the dress of a buffetier. The other three waiting-men follow as captive Saracens, in turbans and particoloured surcoats, with tights of the same colours, one on each leg—the colours being black and blazes. The Viscount is giving instructions for the Gothicisation of his mansion, and expense is to be no object. All at once the buffetier pauses in his march, and, after the manner of clown when he takes four or five pounds of sausages out of his breeches pocket, produces from a similar depository the wonderful dish. He also puts his fingers into his mouth and draws out in an elaborate manner about three yards of stout cane, one end of which he balances on the tip of his chin whilst he spins upon the other end the wonderful dish. Alarmed for the safety of the eucharistic vessel by which Bishop Leo bought off the vengeance of the Huns, the dreamer seizes the irreverent beef-eater by what seems to be the liripipe of his

hood. But the impression produced thereby upon the beefeater is just nothing at all ; for the liripipe turns out to be a rope of greasy black hair attached to the back of the beef-eater's head, which is otherwise as bare as a billiard ball, after the manner of a Chinese juggler with whom Georgius was much amused last week. The exasperating wretch, it need not be said, spins the eucharistic vessel upon his chin with unabated if not increased assiduity.

The Viscount having now disappeared, there come forth from their picture-frames the men of mark and metal with the set teeth and dreadful eyes ; and behold ! every one of these has a rope of greasy black hair and a head otherwise as bare as a billiard ball. Whereupon the treacherous Saracens produce from out of their pockets a succession of more and more wonderful dishes, and draw from their stomachs an equal number of longer and longer canes, which they deftly throw to the men of mark and metal, who deftly catch them and all begin to spin their dishes on the ends of their canes on the tips of their chins, and all in solemn silence.

But neither is this the end of it: indeed the silence is not long to last. One of the men of mark and metal—in fact it is either Herod the tetrarch or Alexander the pope, Georgius cannot tell which—suddenly makes his dish twirl high in the air in such a way as to descend smash upon the head of the dreamer, breaking itself into a thousand pieces. Georgius instinctively reflects upon the difficulty which will arise in respect of its repair, when another of the dishes falls in like manner plump upon his head, and drives all ideas of archæology out of it like the smoke of his pipe. The remainder of the scene is occupied by a continual repetition of this outrage; and, as every successive dish carries away a portion of Georgius's hair by reason of the violence of its impact, it happens that the last of them leaves him like the rest with nothing but a pigtail attached to the back of his head, which is otherwise as bare as a billiard ball.

It is perhaps natural that all the figures in this remarkable scene shall now abandon silence for shouts of derision; and it is equally natural that the four fair ladies in

the four corners of the gallery shall come forth from their seclusion and join in the fun, and that the two others by the horologe shall more particularly rise up and assail Master Georgius Oldhousen with all the blandishments they have been storing up for three or four thousand years. But the eminent architect is fortunately equal to the occasion. Upon the excellent principle that needs must when the devil drives, he catches up a dish from Keops and a long cane from Kephren, and in another moment is balancing the cane on his chin and spinning the dish on the cane as adroitly as the best of the company ; and as the men of mark and metal form a circle and dance around him, with the six ladies inside revolving in ladies' chain, the whole affair turns into a game of kiss in the ring ; and, just as Georgius has caught Potiphar's wife, he wakes up with such a start that he jumps from between his quilts, swears half a dozen mediæval oaths at the Viscount Malign, and begins to rush about his hall in total darkness in a drenching sweat, and as naked as he was born.

It will be a satisfaction to the reader, how-

ever, to know that when, by the help of an antique flint and steel, he has lighted a candle in one of his sconces, he discovers that the adventure is no more than the illusion of an after-dinner brain. Although immensely scandalised in spite of himself, he is presently able to trust his person between his quilts again ; where he sleeps soundly till the morning.

CHAPTER LI.

BREAKFAST.

THERE comes to breakfast this morning with Master Georgius and his sister the Reverend Theo their brother, who holds a curacy in the country. The Reverend Theo is a raw-boned youth of about eight-and-twenty, tall and shy. He wears a long narrow coat—in fact much too long and much too narrow, and straight as a chimney-pot—closely buttoned to the chin. His hair, which is red, being cut very close, and his face being entirely without beard, his hat is a stiff low hemispheroid with an exceedingly broad flat brim. He is not shortsighted like his brother, but his eyes are weak; and he has to wear blue spectacles, and consequently to be content to see things generally in a dismal light. All this makes him appear to

some people somewhat peculiar ; but everybody who knows Theo knows him for a very good young man, and the ladies admire him extremely, perhaps because he is so good.

‘ Hullo, Theo !’

‘ Hullo, George !’

‘ How are you ? Sit down, old fellow.’

‘ How are *you* ? Thank you, George, all right.’

‘ What’s the news this morning ?’

Mr. Georgius, by the bye, does not take in the paper—certainly not ; he prefers to take his news from rumour, after the ancient manner.

Theo’s face, long enough at its shortest, becomes elongated at this question.

‘ The judgment of the Privy Council,’ he says, ‘ is out.’

‘ Oh ! is it ?’ says Georgius contemptuously, letting his glass fall.

‘ It is very adverse,’ says the Reverend Theo.

‘ Well, you know,’ says Georgius, ‘ if there was anything really ancient about it, I

should be disposed to go in for it, you know; but this Privy Council is only a modern thing, you know—no quaintness about it.'

‘No doubt.’

‘It’s an awful nuisance, though. I suppose this is our breakfast, old fellow. The maiden says Mariana ain’t getting up this morning.’

‘Awful nuisance! I suppose it is George. What’s the matter with Mariana?’

‘Cold in her head. And what’s the judgment, old fellow?’

‘It turns chiefly, as I suppose you are aware, upon one’s having the right to put on red stockings.’

‘Quite right, too. Quaint and picturesque. You go in for coffee, I know.’

‘Thank you, yes. Of course it is quite right; but they won’t allow it.’

‘Who won’t?’ says Georgius defiantly, dropping his eyeglass.

‘The Privy Council won’t.’

‘Well, suppose they don’t?’

‘They have suspended the appellant.’



‘What, for putting on red stockings ?
Sugar, of course ?’

‘Yes. A very little bit, thank you, I take less now.’

‘Why don’t he let somebody else put ’em on for him ? That enough ?’

‘So he does. Quite.’

‘Well, let ’em suspend the fellow that puts ’em on.’

‘But they don’t see it in that light. No milk, George.’

‘Oh ! they don’t, don’t they ? None at all ?’

‘No, George, I’ve given it up. They can’t be made to see it. It was ably argued, but they don’t see it. Thanks. I am very much surprised.’

‘What’s the use of arguing with fellows like that ? What have we got here ?’ (refixing his glass). ‘Hot cross buns ? So it is. It’s all a waste of time, you know. There’s nothing ancient about them. Hotcross buns, Theo, there you are.’

‘I can answer for one person, George. Thanks immensely.’

‘Who’s that ? Butter ?’

‘Myself; I will *not* give up the practice. No butter, thank you; I never take it now; it’s poison.’

‘Of course not; and I can answer for another—I’ll go in for it if that’s of any use to you. What do you mean by poison, old fellow?’

It is plain enough that the Reverend Theo is one of those excellent young men who doubt whether the Reformation was not a mistake. It must be acknowledged by any one with an eye in his head that this particular young man is not likely to prosper so well upon the doubt as another doubter of whom we have had to say a good deal; but of his perfect sincerity there can be no question whatever. Nor can there be of the sincerity of Master Georgius.

‘I’ll tell you what it is, old fellow,’ says the architect, fixing his glass thoughtfully in his eye. ‘we’re getting on, you know, nevertheless. We’re standing in the ancient ways a great deal more than we used to stand in the ancient ways before. Of all things in the world I hate things that are modern, you know; and I remember the time when

I didn't.' He drops his glass with a jerk.

'And if that be so with regard to art,' says Theo, 'how much more with regard to the Church.'

'Yes, old fellow; I don't see, for one, how there can be a Church at all if it ain't ancient—that is, quaint and picturesque. Egg too much done?' (Glass fixed to look at it.)

'Just so,' says Theo. 'Not at all, George. And do you really think the sixteenth century is ancient enough?'

'No,' says Georgius, 'I don't.'

'Nor do I,' replies the Reverend Theo; 'pass the pepper, George, please.'

'Have a little butter in it, old fellow. If I were in the Church, you know, I should go in for a head, you know.'

'No, thank you, none. I feel the want of a head very much.'

'I don't care so much'—(dropping his glass) 'Another bun?—what sort of a head it is; anything's better, you know, than no head at all, ain't it?'

‘These are very nice buns, George. I think so too.’

‘They are made after a quaint receipt of my own. I got it out of the grant of the Manor of Middlings to Simon de Bran, you know. You’ll find them much better with a little butter, old fellow. All right—if you won’t be persuaded. The King grants this Manor of Middlings and so on to Simon de Bran on this quaint condition amongst other things—that on every Good Friday when the moon is new he shall supply to the neighbouring monastery of Saints Peter and Paul—a very interesting ruin of the twelfth century—Go in for some more coffee? No? What an abstemious chap you are!—thirteen buns baked with the mark of the holy cross and so on; and so I copied the receipt, you know. What you commonly get is only modern. Go in for marmalade, old fellow? Don’t say no. What an abstemious chap you are!’

‘Talking of the Church, George, it seems to me the older I get’—Theo speaks as if he had lived through a hundred-and-fifty years of melancholy experience — ‘the

more I want some authority to rely upon.'

'Of course you do,' is his brother's reply; 'some ancient authority—I mean really ancient, you know, and no mistake. Just look at these modern bishops, Theo—positively having babies, you know!' Georgius fixes his eyeglass indignantly.

'Very sad,' says Theo; 'such is life.'

'No it isn't,' says Georgius, 'not necessarily.'

'Of course not necessarily,' Theo acknowledges; 'I didn't mean necessarily, George.'

'If I was a bishop, Theo—What have you got under that cover, old chap?'

Theo discovers mushrooms on toast.

'Help yourself, old fellow.'

'No, thank you, George, I have quite done, thank you.'

'If I was a bishop, you know—You won't have any? What an abstemious old chap you are! Pass me one, there's a good fellow.'

'You'll excuse me, George, I'm sure, but

you can't possibly be going in for mushrooms after marmalade.'

'Why not? I didn't see them before. Now that's exactly what you fellows do, you know. You take a prejudice against a thing, you know, without having any reason in your minds at all.' (Drops his glass indignantly.)

'Well, it seems scarcely the thing to do, does it?'

'Why not? It's capital; quite a new discovery, old fellow: try some.'

Theo would very much rather not, really.

'I shall always eat mushrooms after marmalade now that I've discovered it,' says Georgius; 'my opinion is that it will be found to be an ancient practice. You've no idea what a quaint effect it produces—quite picturesque. I find that most of our best artistic impressions come to be discovered by accident; that's my idea of real art as distinguished from sordid invention. Any fool could tell that mushrooms *ought not* to come in well after marmalade, but it's a work of genius, you know, to find that they *do*.

But we were talking about bishops, old fellow.'

'So we were.'

'You know that I've gone in for the ancient way of sleeping at night?'

'Yes, George; how does it answer?'

'Admirably isn't the word, Theo, old fellow. Magnificent! Now if our bishops would follow this quaint and picturesque old practice, you know——'

'And why not all the clergy?' says Theo.

'Of course,' replies Georgius, 'and everybody else for that matter; but, speaking of bishops, that would soon take the nonsense out of them, wouldn't it?'

'I should think it would,' says Theo; 'if I were a bishop I should certainly go in for it; but a curate of course ought not to make himself conspicuous; the rector doesn't like it.'

'Well, I don't know about that, you know; I don't think I should consult the rector.'

'That is why we want a head, George; the more I see of this, the more I seem to want

authority to go by—some higher authority than rectors and bishops.'

'Modern ones you mean, of course.'

'Modern ones, certainly.'

CHAPTER LII.

ENTER MONSIGNORE.

MASTER GEORGIUS the architect and his reverend brother, having smoked a pipe after breakfast, descend to the ground floor to the master's private studio. Here the antique heating apparatus has been set going for the day by the maid; the antique sleeping apparatus removed; the chairs set in their places; and everything else put into due order—or disorder—or such order as the occupant's quaint and picturesque habits require or permit. The morning sun shines into the chamber pleasantly through King Arthur and the Knights of his Table Round; and, as the rushes have been rearranged on the floor, and the wall-hangings shaken together here and there where requisite, the Reverend Theo confesses that he likes the

effect immensely, and enjoys a sense of repose under the ægis of authority which is most grateful to his feelings.

The latest fanaticism that Master Georgius happens to have gone in for is the collection of a number of quaint and picturesque rubbings of brasses. These works of art are produced in the following way. The brasses are those rudely engraved slabs of metal which in mediæval times were let in to church floors or walls to commemorate deceased persons. The admirer of these effigies spreads over one of them a sheet of thin paper. This he rubs carefully with cobbler's heelball. The result in the end is that the paper is covered with black grease, leaving white the lines which on the brass beneath have been cut into the surface by the engraver. To uninitiated people these rubbings are often more hideously amusing than in any way instructive, but that is what cannot be helped; to the initiated they are highly interesting. Master Georgius, therefore, proceeds to direct the attention of the Reverend Theo to his recently acquired treasures. They are pinned up against the

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tapestry on the walls, and are considered to look, as he says, very magnificent.

A tap is heard on the door of the room. One of the clerks enters and hands his master a visiting card. Master Georgius deciphers, with the aid of his eyeglass, this inscription—‘*The Rev. M^{gr}e. Saint-Paul.*’ The clerk has judiciously shut the door, out of consideration for his superior’s habit of expressing himself sometimes, when under the influence of surprise, in language which he might not care to be heard by everybody.

‘By Gemini!’ says Georgius to the Reverend Theo, ‘look here, old fellow, here’s a go!’

Theo inspects the card with that unvarying look of sorrow which is due to his blue spectacles.

‘What’s up?’ says Georgius.

‘Well, I’ll take my leave, George.’

‘No, don’t, old fellow; perhaps it’s nothing.’

Monsignore Saint-Paul is shown into the room. He enters with his usual dignity and grace—and graciousness.

‘Well, good-morning, George,’ says Theo.

‘By no means, sir;’ interposes Monsignore,

‘ by no means. My business, Mr. Oldhousen, will really be over in a very few minutes ; I cannot think of letting your friend go away. One of my own cloth, sir, I see.’

The Reverend Theo bows to the compliment, and Master Georgius has the presence of mind to present his brother to his visitor formally—‘ The Reverend Theophilus Oldhousen, clericus.’

Monsignore bows in his turn and takes a chair; Georgius and Theo, of course, also seat themselves.

‘ In one word, Mr. Oldhousen,’ Monsignore begins, ‘ as you, like myself, are a man of business, I have taken the liberty of coming to consult you upon a matter in which I hope you will be not indisposed to give us the benefit of your well-known professional skill.’

Master Georgius will be most happy to do anything he can to carry out Monsignore’s views ; and he bows politely in saying so, and drops his eyeglass with its accustomed rattle.

‘ Some of us,’ says Monsignore blandly, ‘ are anxious to promote the building of—I

am afraid my reverend friend will not allow me to call it a——'

‘Indeed——’ says Theo nervously, ‘I should be very sorry, sir——’ and collapses.

The architect in the meantime has turned pale. (What good fortune is this?)

‘I don’t see why you shouldn’t call it what you like,’ says he, refixing his glass and setting his head a little on one side in an attitude which some of his more profane associates are accustomed to liken to that of a cock-robin.

‘We will call it, my dear sir—at least such an approximation as our inferior status and limited means——’

‘The same thing,’ says the architect. (It will be a precious long time, he thinks, before such a job comes from the other quarter.)

‘So we propose,’ continues Monsignore Saint-Paul, with a stately gesture of complaisance, ‘*not* to confine ourselves to our own friends——’

Master Georgius makes another bow.

(‘Extremely liberal-minded people,’ he says to himself; ‘I shall get it up in

thirteenth century, whatever it is; with a *suspicion* of Transitional.'

‘—But to ask you, if you will be so good—’

The artist makes still another bow.

(‘Won’t I?’ he says to himself with the rapidity of thought. ‘A cathedral I’ll be bound; cruciform, of course; a tower at the crux; a pair at the western end; chapter house; cloisters; lady chapel; what an opportunity! By Jove!')

‘—To oblige us with a design—’

(‘I should think so!’ says the architect to himself. ‘Fifty thousand pounds at least—perhaps a hundred; leave the central tower till afterwards, and the cloisters; perhaps the chapter-house. What a peal of bells we’ll have!')

‘—In a fraternal *concours*—’

(‘Only a competition,’ thinks the somewhat disappointed artist, dropping his glass; ‘but never mind, I shall be sure to win!')

‘—With—we think—about six or seven other gentlemen of eminence in the ecclesiastical field, all Fellows of the Society of

Antiquaries ; that is, if we can expect them to——'

(‘Oh ! can’t you ?’ says Master Georgius to himself ; ‘ fifty if you like to ask them, and all at their own expense.’)

‘—To take pity upon a despised little community, my dear Mr. Oldhousen, which once upon a time——’

‘ And may again !’ exclaims Georgius magnanimously ; ‘ what do you say, Theo ?’ (Fixing his glass defiantly.)

‘ I cannot allow Mr. Theo——’ interposes Monsignore, raising his well-shaped hand in the direction of the curate ; ‘ no—I cannot allow him indeed to be appealed to. What exquisite rubbings, Mr. Oldhousen !’

‘ Yes,’ says the architect, ‘ they are thought to be very good.’ And he rises from his chair with all the dignity of an appointed competitor for the designing of a cathedral, as certain of success as—as all the others.

‘ This is a particularly fine one,’ says Monsignore.

‘ Yes, it is.’

‘ As lovely,’ says Monsignore reflectively, ‘ as brass can be. A fair young matron ; not

dead, but sleeping. Her hands laid across her bosom. In peace. Wearing her dress of every day; clasped at the slender throat; girdled at the slender waist; the hem drooping over the little feet.'

'Yes, very fine, ain't it?'

'Not a fold disturbed by pain,' continues Monsignore; 'as a soft low wave of summer sea, her breast rising—nothing more. Her mantle sweeping to her feet in fine straight folds—'

'Just as if they were ironed out,' says the Reverend Theo in the most perfect innocence.

Monsignore thinks, probably, he is a weak person; but that does not disturb him.

'Yes,' says Master Georgius, 'it's wonderful, whatever way you look at it; magnificent!'

'And at her little feet,' continues Monsignore, 'her little dog—'

'It's a cat, is it not?' says Theo in his most perfect innocence.

'A lamb, I think,' says Georgius, putting his eyeglass close to the animal.

'Her little dog,' continues Monsignore;

‘the mystery of his little mortal life joined by love to hers immortal! It is very fine. Dame Marjory De Jones, I see. Must have been a charming woman. Reminds me much of a lady I know—the Countess Titania——’

‘How very odd!’ exclaims the architect letting his glass fall, ‘I met her last night at dinner. She is a high-stepper!’

‘A high-stepper!’ says Monsignore; but not altogether severely, indeed with a most gracious smile; ‘and how was the delightful Countess, Mr. Oldhousen?’

‘Don’t ask me,’ exclaims Master Georgius; ‘I’m very glad *I* didn’t have to take her in to dinner.’

‘I suppose the master of the house, perhaps, if he is a good judge of women——’

‘Oh no; a younger man had her all to himself.’

‘And was delighted, I dare say.’

‘Rather!’ Master Georgius fixes his glass again.

‘And did you meet her brother, Mr. Oldhousen?’

‘Oh yes; I didn’t think so much of him.’

‘Failed to please you?’

‘Yes ; too modern for me.’

‘Failed with every one, as with you, Mr. Oldhousen ?’

‘No; I can’t say that.’

‘Generally popular with ladies, the Count Oberon.’

‘I should think so.’

‘Young ladies particularly.’

‘Well, yes.’

‘When he tries—You don’t take snuff, Mr. Oldhousen ?’

‘Thanks.’

Georgius drops his eyeglass; is not to be beaten by a pinch of snuff.

‘When the Count Oberon makes himself really agreeable——’

Georgius sneezes violently in the act of refixing his glass.

‘Pungent, you find it,’ says Monsignore.

Georgius sneezes again ; and drops his glass; again, and refixes it ; again, and sends it flying over his shoulder.

‘Once more,’ says Monsignore, ‘and it will be over.’

Georgius sneezes once more ; and, after a fashion, it fortunately is over.

‘It comes from the Corso,’ says Monsignore.

‘I thought it was some classical stuff,’ says Georgius; ‘it’s not so bad, but it’s deficient in quaintness.’

‘Very good,’ says Monsignore, laughing; ‘our Count Oberon, of whom you were speaking, I should call classical.’

‘Immensely; that’s what I didn’t like about him.’

‘Certainly not quaint. But for a lady, and especially a very young lady——’

‘Yes, she was vastly pleased, I should say.’

‘A most fascinating young man, Mr. Oldhousen, in that way,’ says Monsignore, shaking his head; ‘most fascinating, I am afraid; irresistible.’

‘Yes; I shouldn’t like a sister of mine, for instance——’ Georgius succeeds in refixing his eyeglass.

‘No sisters?’

‘One.’

Monsignore laughs, Mr. Georgius has such a witty way with him. But Mr. Georgius does not speak out as might be wished.

- - -

Monsignore reflects for a moment. Of course, he reflects, Mr. Georgius could scarcely be expected to speak out about a lady as he has done about the 'younger man.'

Monsignore takes his leave. He hopes to have the pleasure of communicating with Mr. Oldhousen again before long.

'What can have brought him to me?' says Georgius to Theo; 'it's the last thing in the world I should have expected, old fellow.'

'Your reputation, George, is of course extending,' replies the curate.

'I suppose it is; what an opportunity! I shall throw myself heart and soul into it. I mean to sit down to it at once. I shall go in to win, Theo, old fellow, you see if I don't!'

'Perhaps the others——' begins Theo in hesitating reply, 'I wouldn't be too confident, George.'

'They *can't*, not one of them!'

CHAPTER LIII.

ALL GOES WELL.

‘His Excellency’s little dinner went off well, I see,’ says Monsignore Saint-Paul as he walks along. ‘The Countess has not belied our expectations, evidently. Nor has the Count. Two charming young people! I wonder if my good uncle has begun his pamphlet.’ Monsignore winces so palpably that a gentleman who is passing looks hard at him. He recovers himself, therefore, promptly. ‘The Church,’ he reflects with dignity, ‘the Church never yet—and in my person never shall—’

‘We have authority for stating,’ say the newspapers, ‘that Monsignore Saint-Paul has been offered the vacant provincial bishopric, but that he has felt obliged to decline it on account of his reluctance to

sever his connection with those numerous enterprises of a religious and philanthropic character in the metropolis which his benevolent influence has so long contributed to support. We have no doubt that the self-denial of this eminent divine will be duly appreciated by all classes of persons who are brought into intercourse with him, and that, so far as human honours have any attraction for him, he will be no loser in the end.'

'Exactly so,' is the remark of the Reverend John Jacob, 'exactly so; Paul means to be a Cardinal.'

END OF VOL. I.

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